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SHANDON BELLS

A Novel

75398

BY

WILLIAM BLACK

AUTHOR OF 'MACLEOD OF DARE,' 'SUNRISE,' ETC.

"With deep affection
And recollection
I often think of
Those Shandon bells,
Whose sounds so wild would
In the days of childhood
Fling round my cradle
Their magic spells."
FATHER PROUT.

London
MACMILLAN AND CO.
1884

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TO THE MEMORY OF THE AUTHOR OF 'MOORLAND AND STREAM,' 'SPORTING SKETCHES AND HOLIDAY RAMBLES,' AND OTHER WRITINGS; AND TO THE MEMORY OF A LONG AND INTIMATE FRIENDSHIP; THIS BOOK, WHICH HAS BEEN LARGELY COLOURED BY BOTH, IS AFFECTIONATELY, BUT NOW AIMLESSLY, DEDICATED.

London, 1882.

SHANDON BELLS

CONTENTS.

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	"Over Running Water"	1
II.	A High Conclave	14
III.	A First Cast	31
IV.	A New Acquaintance	39
V.	The Beginning of a Career	49
VI.	A First Check	62
VII.	"When all the World was Young"	74
VIII.	In London again	91
IX.	In Straits	106
X.	New Friends	116
XI.	A Disclosure	128
XII.	A Go-Between	135
XIII.	Neighbours	145
XIV.	Two Letters	156
XV.	A Symposium	166
XVI.	A Morning Walk and other Matters	118

CHAP. PAGE

XVII.—An Apparition 192

XVIII.—Storm and Calm 205

XIX.—A Prospect 232

XX.—Some Correspondence 244

XXI.—Imaginings 262

XXII.—The Revelation 275

XXIII.—"Sie Tragen zu dir, O Geliebte!" . 283

XXIV.—Alone 299

XXV.—Glimmerings 313

XXVI.—To the Rescue 321

XXVII.—At Boat of Garry 331

XXVIII.—The Black Swan 346

XXIX.—Plans and Dreams 358

XXX.—The Book 377

XXXI.—In the East 389

XXXII.—In a Gallery 398

XXXIII.—At Inisheen 407

SHANDON BELLS.

CHAPTER I.

"OVER RUNNING WATER."

So still this night was. The white moonlight lay over the sleeping world; the Atlantic was calm; the little harbour-town of Inisheen, with all its picturesque squalor of quays and creeks and stranded boats, had gone to rest; and here, high up in this inland glen (from which the sea was visible only as a sharp line of silver at the horizon), among the felled trees and the brushwood, there was no sound save the continuous "hush—sh—sh" of the streamlet far below in the darkness. Nor was there any sign of life in this open glade—not even a rabbit out browsing on the dew-wet grass, or a curlew crossing the clear depths of the blue-gray sky in its flight from the moor to the shore. Only the moonlight shining calm and still on the wilderness of bramble and bracken and furze, and here and there on the white stump of a felled beech or ash; and always the murmur, down below, of the unseen rivulet on its way to the Blackwater and the sea.

But by-and-by, along the road over there, that was barred across by the shadows of some tall elms, two people came slowly walking, and the cheerful sound of their speaking was clear in the stillness.

"The more I think of it," said one of them, who was a very pretty, slightly-formed young lady, with eyes as black as the sloe, a mouth that could assume a most piquant expression, and a voice that was soft and musical and laughing,—"the more I think of it, this seems the most

extraordinary escapade I ever entered upon. Altogether a most decorous proceeding! I suppose by this time every soul in Inisheen is fast asleep; and no doubt Miss Romayne is supposed to be asleep too—and dreaming of the Conservatoire and her *début* at Covent Garden; while as for Master Willie, if he were to be missed, of course they'd imagine that he was away after the wild-duck again; so it would be all right for him. Sure I think," she added, altering her voice slightly, and speaking very shyly, "sure I think 'tis I am the wild-duck that Masther Willie is afther."

"Do you know, Kitty," said her companion, who was taller and fairer than she, a young fellow of two-and-twenty, perhaps, with light-brown wavy hair, the shrewdest of clear blue eyes, and a well-set, slim figure,—"do you know, Kitty, when you speak in our Irish way like that, my heart is just full of love for you."

"Oh, indeed!" she said, in a tone of surprise. "Oh, indeed. And at other times what is it full of, then?"

"Well, at other times," he said, "at other times, you see—well, at other times, Kitty, do you know, it is just full of love for you. Never mind. When I go to England I'll soon get rid of the Cork accent; and when I come back to you, Kitty——"

"Indeed you may save yourself the trouble," she interposed promptly. "I am not going to have any stranger come back to me. I am going to have nobody but my wild Irish boy, with whatever accent he has, and with all the—the—cheek he is not likely to get rid of anywhere. There's no other word for it, I declare. Such cheek as never was heard of! Do you know, sir, that I sang at the Crystal Palace with Titiens and Santley?"

"You've reminded me of it pretty often, Kitty," was the meek reply.

"Yes; and Miss Catherine Romayne, who has sent all Dublin wild with her singing of Irish songs, who could make engagements all over Ireland for the rest of her natural life, comes to Cork—to find herself patronised by the *Cork Chronicle!* The *Cork Chronicle*, indeed! And it isn't the editor, mind you, but only the sub-editor—does he sweep out the office, too?—that has undertaken to sing

the praises of Miss Romayne, and make the whole country understand what a wonder she is! Dear me, what beautiful language! *It has been reserved for an English singer to reveal to the Irish people the pathos of 'The Bells of Shandon.'* Truly! What did they think the song was, then? Did they think it was comic? Then came the usual thing—I foresaw it from the beautiful writing in the *Cork Chronicle*—bouquets; complimentary notes; finally an introduction; and behold! the sub-editor of the *Chronicle* isn't in the least a pale youth with long hair and inky fingers, but rather half a young gamekeeper and half a young squireen and the remainder a fair-haired Apollo Belvedere with a delightful accent and the most ingenuous blush. And oh, such innocence! and oh, such modesty! Modesty! 'May he be permitted to call?' And the very next day, as Miss Romayne and her faithful guardian are seated at their midday meal, there's a knock at the door; and enter Mr. Modesty! Bless the man, I said to myself, doesn't he know what's what, but he must pay an afternoon call at two o'clock in the day? Anybody in his senses would have backed out; but you weren't the least in your senses—confess it now, Willie!——"

"Were you?—when you found your pretty black hair was all about your shoulders, and bottled stout on the table? And 'would Mr. Fitzgerald sit down and have some lunch?' and 'would Mr. Fitzgerald prefer a glass of sherry?' At all events you were civil-mannered then, Kitty."

This was carrying the war into the enemy's country; but she paid no heed.

"I think you grew more happy, Willie, when I went to the piano and so got my back turned on you, and when Miss Patience took her newspaper to the window; at least you grew more audacious in your flattery—there was something about Tara's harp being awakened again—and then—there was a moment—after that 'Bells of Shandon' that you would have—I think there was a moment when I chanced to turn, and I fancied young Mr. Gamekeeper's clear blue eyes weren't quite so clear as usual—can you tell me?"

"It seems a long time ago," he said absently, "though it isn't. Can you tell me, Kitty, why it is that Miss Patience, who was so friendly with me at first, took it into her head to quarrel with me?"

"Why, you quarrelled with her!"

"Nonsense; I did nothing of the sort," he said, with a laugh. "But when her manner changed all of a sudden and she practically forbade me the house, of course I took the hint."

"And a nice position both of you have put me into. But mind you, Master Willie, whether you had been going to England or not, this must have been the last of these hole-and-corner meetings. Moonlight walks are very pleasant; but—but it won't do, you know, especially for one placed as I am. There is such a thing as propriety, though you don't seem to think so. And now I suppose this one is to be the most fatal of all, with witcheries, and enchantments, and what not. By the way," she added, stopping short in the road, and looking him straight in the face, "how do I know what you mayn't be making me promise? When you repeated some of the gibberish the other night of course I couldn't understand a word."

"Don't be alarmed, Kitty; I will put it all into English for you. And we are close by the place now; if you will step over this bit of the wall, I will take you down into the glen."

He helped her over the low moss-grown wall, and they emerged from under the shadow of the elms into the clear open glade described above. Her face, which was unusually expressive by reason of those soft, large, sloe-black eyes, was more serious now. She glanced up and down the wooded valley, lying all white in the moonlight, and then said to him, almost in a whisper—

"Is this where you said the saints shut up Don Fierna and the pixies?"

"No," he said, "that was away over there in the mountains. But they say the little people can get out into this valley; and you won't catch many of the Inisheen natives about here after dark. Farther up the glen there is a very curious echo; of course that is Don Fierna

answering you when you call to him. But they don't like to speak of such things about here; the priests are against it."

"And the well?"

"It is down there," he answered, pointing to the narrow ravine which seemed jet black below them.

"Oh, I can't go down there, Willie," she said, almost shuddering.

"It is very easy," he answered cheerfully, to reassure her. "And you won't find it dark when once you are down. Give me your hand, Kitty; hold tight, and watch where you put your feet."

Slowly and cautiously they made their way down the side of the chasm, through the bracken and furze and tangled underwood, until at last they reached the bed of the streamlet at a point where the water tumbled into a natural basin that had been worn out of the rock. Nor was it quite so dark as it had appeared from above. The bushes around them were quite black, it is true; but the clear sky far overhead lent a reflected light that touched here and there the falling water and the troubled pool with a wan gleam. It was strange that the noise of the brook appeared to make no impression on the sound of their voices. This seemed to be an absolute silence in which they spoke.

He stepped across the water—she remaining on this side; and then he reached his hand to her.

"Give me your hand, Kitty."

She did so in silence. Their outstretched hands were clasped together over the stream.

"You must repeat to me what I say to you—it is quite simple, Kitty. Don't be afraid." (For he thought she was trembling somewhat.) "*Over running water: My love I give to you; my life I pledge to you; my heart I take not back from you, while this water runs.*"

He listened for her voice; it was scarcely audible.

"Over running water: My love I give to you," she said; "my life I pledge to you; my heart I take not back from you, while this water runs. Willie, it is not hard to promise that. I will say it again if you wish me to."

"Listen, Kitty. *Over running water: Every seventh year, at this time of the year, at this time of the night, I will meet you at this well, to renew my troth to you: death alone to relieve me from this vow.*"

She repeated the words without faltering.

"And this is the last, Kitty. *Over running water: A curse on the one that fails; and a curse on any that shall try to come between us two; and grief to be a guest in their house, and sorrow to dwell in their house for ever.*"

"Oh no, not that, Willie!" she cried, almost piteously. "Let this be a love night! Don't let there be any hatred in it. I don't mind the rest—but not that!"

He did not answer; he held her hand in silence.

"Well, if you want me to, I will. Tell me the words again."

No sooner was the ceremony, or charm, or whatever it might be called, completed, than he leapt across the little stream, and caught her in his arms, and kissed her.

"Now you are mine, Kitty! Bell, book, and candle can't divide us now. But why are you trembling? You are not afraid?—you who are afraid of nothing! Come, we will clamber up again into the moonlight; you know if Don Fierna has let any of his little people out, you would never get a glimpse of them away down here. Wouldn't it be fine to see the procession come down through the bracken—

'Trooping all together,
Green Jacket, Red Cap,
And White Owl's Feather.'

—Kitty, what is the matter with you?"

"Yes, let us get away," she said in a low voice. "I want to be up in the light—give me your hand, Willie."

So he helped her to clamber up through the brushwood again until they got into the moonlight; and as they made for the road, he noticed that she glanced back for a second—a hasty, frightened glance, it seemed—at the dark hollow from which they had emerged. But he would not have her frightened on such a night as this. He would have nothing but gladness, and hope, and love-promises on such a night. And she was very impressionable. Soon she

was laughing. Soon she was scolding him for not having ordered a review of the little people for her beforehand. Here she had come to the very headquarters of the elves and the pixies; and not one to be seen.

"Oh yes, one," she admitted. "I have indeed made the acquaintance of one—on the beach this morning; and a more extraordinary one Mr. Doyle never drew. You know him, Willie—at least he says he knows you very well—a little man with wild red hair, and a tall hat, and a gray jacket with scarlet sleeves——"

"Why, it's Andy the Hopper. Had he his pole with him?"

"What pole?"

"The leaping-pole he has for taking short cuts across the bog," said he, greatly delighted to see her so cheerful again.

"I didn't see any pole. But I made out very soon that he was intimately acquainted with you; and so I thought I might as well get some independent testimony about the character of my husband that is to be. Oh, I assure you I was most discreet. Andy the Hopper, if that is his name, had very little notion why I wanted to know this or that about the Fitzgeralds, and especially about Mr. William Fitzgerald. Would you like to know how he described you, Willie?"

"If Andy the Hopper has been saying anything against me—I mean to you, Kitty,—I'll beat the blackguard with his own pole till there's not an inch of whole skin on him," was her companion's decisive reply.

"'Is it Masther Willie ye mane?' he said. I said it was. 'Sure, miss, 'tis the duck's back that Masther Willie has got, and trouble runs off it like water. At the very ind of the day if he was to lose the biggest salmon ever hooked in the Blackwater, d'ye think he'd be afther sittin' down and cryin'? Divil a bit—begging your pardon, miss. He'd be whistlin' the ould tunes as he put up the rod; and then away home wid his spaches and his singing and his poethry, and a laugh and a joke for all the gyurls that he'd meet. Glory be to God, miss, but 'tis Masther Willie has the light heart.' But wait a moment, Master Willie. I thought that phrase about the gyurls a little singular.

Or rather it isn't singular, for it's plural. How many gyurls is an Irish young gentleman supposed to be in love with at the same time? Don't I know the song—

> 'Here's a health to the girls that we loved long ago
> Where the Shannon, and Liffey, and Blackwater flow'—

—Why 'girls?'"

"Why not, Kitty? The song is about the Irish Brigade. You wouldn't have the whole brigade in love with one?"

"I don't know; it sounds suspicious; and I suppose we are not more than a stone's throw from the Blackwater now. But you may reassure yourself, Master Willie. I was very discreet. I put no questions about the gyurls to the gentleman in the red-sleeved jacket; and so he went on to say you were a great sportsman, and to give me many stories of midnight adventures you and he had had together, after the wild-fowl."

"That's all over now, Kitty," said he, looking away across to the shallows and the mud-flats of the wide bay of Inisheen, where many a time he had brought a mallard thumping down, or listened to the clang of a string of wild-geese far overhead in the dark. "London is a terrible place to be alone in. I remember the first time I went there, and saw the miles and miles of streets and houses, and the strange faces, and the crowds hurrying and hurrying and hurrying, I said to myself I should lose heart altogether if I were to find myself alone in such a tremendous ocean, fighting to keep my head above water. Better the *Cork Chronicle;* and an ambition limited to the publishing of one small volume of poems some day; and, for the rest of it, over the bog after snipe, or up the mountain after hares, with Andy the Hopper. And then you must needs come along, Kitty, and spoil all my content. Even now I fear I am going to London against my better judgment. Having you, Kitty, what do I want with fame or money?"

"Stuff. I know you are fearfully ambitious, Master Willie, though you won't own it. Would you like to go on for ever as the sub-editor of the *Cork Chronicle?* Would you have me keep singing away at concerts until my little share of good looks was gone, and then the public would

discover there was nothing in my singing at all? I am certain your philosophy is all pretence. I don't believe Andy the Hopper a bit when he says you'd only whistle an ould tune or spake poethry after losing a big fish; I believe you would be much nearer crying with vexation. You don't impose on me, Master Willie; and we will see some day whether London is too big for you to fight."

"If it was the old times, Kitty, and I could start with a shield and a spear and your ribbon round my arm: that would be something like the thing. But at any rate I can carry your name in my heart."

She stopped and took his head in her two hands, and pulled it down and kissed him lightly on the forehead.

"That is where the victor's crown is to be," she said.

"I am not thinking of any victor's crown," said he. "I am thinking of the trip that you and I will make, every seven years, to this old place of Inisheen, and our going over the old walks again, and thinking of old times. And the day may come, Kitty, when getting down that steep bank may be too much for frail old limbs, and perhaps Don Fierna will excuse us, if we make the pilgrimage, and show him that we have not separated, even if we don't try to go down to the well."

"Seven years," she said musingly. "It is a long time, Willie——"

But he did not hear her. He had stepped down to unmoor a small boat that lay half hidden in the shadow of a creek. When he was ready, he called to her; and then he assisted her, with the most affectionate care, into the stern of the boat, and pulled her shawl close at the neck, and generally had her made comfortable. Then he took the oars, and in a few moments they had shot out into the broad and shallow and moonlit waters of the inner bay of Inisheen. As yet they could talk together openly without fear of being overheard from the shore: for Inisheen itself —a tumbled mass of houses and quays and vessels—lay away along there, between them and the Atlantic.

"Besides," continued Miss Romayne, as if she had been resuming some argument, "you say yourself this is such a chance as you might never get again."

"Well, it is a chance," he answered, slowly pulling away at the short (and muffled) oars. "Fancy Hilton Clarke being in Inisheen, and no one knowing it!"

"Perhaps they were all as wise as I was, Willie, and had never heard his name before!"

"You must have heard his name, Kitty," he said impatiently. "Why, he is one of the most distinguished men of letters in England——"

"But what has he done, Willie?"

"Oh, everything," he said, rather confusedly. "Every one knows who he is. There is scarcely a better-known name in contemporary literature——"

"But what has he done, Willie? I might get it and read it, you know."

"Why, he is one of the greatest critics of the day—writes for all sorts of things—there is no one better known. He is said to have the finest judgment in literary matters of almost anybody living; and the reviews that he writes are always so scholarly, and—and—full of happy ingenuities of expression—any one can recognise them——"

"Yes," said the pertinacious young lady with the pretty mouth and the soft dark eyes, "but hasn't he done anything himself? Hasn't he done any work of his own? Couldn't I buy a book of his, to let me know something more of your wonderful hero?"

"Well, I believe he translated *Les Fleurs du Mal*—the original edition—but the book was privately printed——"

"I am sure I never heard of it, in English or anything else," said she.

"Perhaps you never heard of Baudelaire either, Kitty," said he, gently. "You see it would be easy for you to puzzle me about the distinguished people in music—I know so little about what's going on in music."

"Oh, very well," said she, good-naturedly, "let him be as distinguished as you like; that can't make him an agreeable-looking man."

"I consider him very handsome," he said in astonishment.

"What!—that lanky, supercilious, white-faced creature, with his stony stare?"

He burst out laughing.

"I do believe you're jealous, Kitty! Why, you only saw him for a second, at the door of the Imperial, and you have never spoken to him. I consider him an exceedingly fine fellow, and the trouble he took about me—a perfect stranger to him—was quite extraordinary. It was indeed a chance, my running against him at all. You know, Kitty," said he—though there was a slight blush on his face—"I am not ashamed of my father keeping an inn—or a public-house, or whatever you may call it——"

"An inn!" she exclaimed. "A public-house! The Impayrial Hotel—the only hotel in Inisheen—to be talked of like that!"

"—but all the same when I come here I don't go into the smoking-room. It is always filled with these Coursing Club people; and the Duke of Wellington 'wrenched, killed, and won like a hero;' and Sweetbriar was 'slow from the slips;' and Timothy 'scored first turn;' and Miss Maguire 'finished with the most lovely mill;' and all the rest of the jargon. Indeed I'd rather go to another inn, if there was one, when I come to Inisheen; but that might vex my father. Well, this stranger I didn't meet at the inn at all; but along the road: with his basket and rod and gaff all complete; and as we got talking about fishing, I looked over his fly-book for him—all sorts of fantastic nonsense got up in London to look pretty in a drawing-room. Then I offered to show him some flies. Then it turned out he was staying at the Imperial. And then we had a long evening together—all contrariwise; for I had found out who he was, and I wanted to talk about all the literary men in London—and he seemed to know every one of them; but he wanted to talk about nothing but river-trout and sea-trout and grilse and salmon, and the different rivers in the neighbourhood. But it was a fine evening, all the same; and he showed himself most friendly—and has been so ever since, Miss Kitty, in his letters. And just fancy his asking me, a young newspaper fellow in Cork, to come and see him as soon as I get to London! If you only knew the position he holds. But I think we'd better be quiet now, Kitty, until we get past the town."

Picturesque indeed was the old town of Inisheen on this beautiful night—the moonlight shining on the windows of the few houses on the side of the hill and on the gray gables along the harbour, and causing the golden cock on the top of the old Town Hall to gleam as if it were a repetition of the beacon-light far away there on the cliff overlooking the sea; while heavy masses of shadow lay over the various creeks and quays, where broad-bottomed vessels had found a berth in the ooze. But there was another Inisheen—an Inisheen of new and trim villas—that formed a fashionable watering-place fronting the open sea; and there it was that Miss Romayne lodged; and thither it was that Master Willie was stealthily rowing. Indeed, they soon drew away from the picturesque old town, and found before them the gently murmuring Atlantic, that broke in a fringe of silver foam all along the level sands.

And Miss Romayne was singing too—not with the fine contralto voice that she could send ringing through a vast hall, but humming to herself, as it were, in a low and gentle fashion "Farewell! but whenever you welcome the hour," and putting a good deal more pathos into the words than appears there if one reads them in cold blood. For she had a pathetic voice; and these two were alone under the shining heavens and on the beautiful, calm sea; and they were young, and life and love were before them; and also the tragic misery of parting.

"I will bid you the real good-bye to-night, Willie," she said, "and then I don't care for fifty Miss Patiences to-morrow. You must put me ashore at the jetty; and I will walk up alone. She is sure to be asleep. If not—then I was restless, and had to go out for a walk. And you will stop at the jetty, Willie, until you see me right up at the house, in case Don Fierna and his little people should snatch me up and carry me off to that dreadful glen."

"Why dreadful, Kitty? Are you sorry?"

"Oh no—not sorry. But there is something unholy about all that happened there. If that well were like the other wells about, that the saints have blessed, there would have been little bits of ribbon and suchlike offerings on the bushes. There was nothing of that kind *there*. I

know I wouldn't go back alone to that valley for a million pounds."

He rested one hand on the oars, and with the other reached over and took hers.

"But I hope neither you nor I, Kitty, will ever find ourselves there alone."

He rowed in to the little jetty, and then stepped ashore and assisted her to follow, on to the gray stones. The leave-taking was a long one; there were many assurances and asseverations, and a little hysterical crying on her part. But at last the final good-bye had to come; and he put a hand on each of her cheeks and held her head as though he would read to the bottom of those soft, beautiful, tear-bedimmed eyes.

"You will never forget—you cannot forget—what you promised me to-night, Kitty, when our hands were clasped over the stream?"

"Is it likely?" she said, sobbing violently. "Is it likely I shall forget, any single day as long as I live?"

Then she went away alone, and he waited and watched the solitary slight little figure go along the moonlit road, and up to the house. There was a flutter of a white handkerchief; he returned that signal. He waited again; there was no sign. So he got into the boat again, and rowed silently away to Inisheen harbour, like one in a dream.

Only a moonlight night, and the parting of two lovers. And yet sometimes such things remain visible across the years.

CHAPTER II.

A HIGH CONCLAVE.

THAT was an eventful evening in the life of young Fitzgerald when he made his way, not without some inward tremor, to the Albany, in order to dine with Mr. Hilton Clarke. For not only was that high honour in store for him, but moreover this new friend, who had been exceedingly kind to him in many ways, had promised he should also meet Mr. Gifford, the editor of the *Liberal Review*. Imagine a boy-lieutenant just joined asked to dine with the Commander-in-Chief and his staff! Away in that provincial newspaper-office, Master Willie had been accustomed to regard the London *Liberal Review* as perhaps the wisest and most original and honest of modern journals; he had many a time clipped out its opinions and quoted them prominently in the *Cork Chronicle;* he had even from week to week studied the way of writing that characterised its columns. And here he was to meet the editor in actual flesh and blood. To listen to the great critic and the great journalist at once! Moreover, he could not help suspecting that Hilton Clarke had arranged this meeting lest peradventure it might be of some service, near or remote, to the young aspirant. He did not know what he had done to deserve such kindness, such good fortune. How had it all come about? So far as he could see, merely through his happening to know what were the best salmon-flies for the Blackwater.

Of course he arrived too soon, and so had plenty of time to saunter up and down the echoing little thoroughfare

and master the lettering and numbering of the buildings. But when, at last, he made his way up the stone staircase to the door on the first landing, and was met by a tall middle-aged woman with a foreign-looking cap on her head, who, speaking in broken English, showed him where to leave his hat and coat, and then ushered him into an apartment the like of which he had never seen in his life before, he began to ask himself if he had not made a mistake. Perhaps he would again have demanded of the black-eyed, soft-voiced, grave person if Mr. Hilton Clarke lived there, but she had gone. However, it was clear that some one was going to dine in this room; for in the middle of it was a small square table very daintily laid out, and lit by a lamp with a pink and white porcelain shade that threw a soft rosy glow around. So at haphazard he sat down, and proceeded to gaze with a sort of awe at the wonderful chamber, the treasures in which, if he had known anything about them, he would have perceived to have come from all parts of the world, but mostly from Venice. From Venice had come the row of lustrous copper water-vessels that had been transformed into big flower-pots and ranged along there on the little balcony outside the French windows; also the quaint and delicate white-and-gold chairs and couches that were now dim with age; and perhaps, too, the framed chalice-cloth over the chimney-piece, the beautiful rich embroidery of which appeared to be falling away, by its own weight, from the frail silken ground. But there was a large inlaid Spanish cabinet in scarlet and lacquered brass that was itself a blaze of colour; and there were Kairwan rugs scattered about the floor; and on the walls were gorgeous masses of Turkish embroidery; likewise a series of candles in sconces, over each of which was hung a piece of Hispano-Moresque pottery, the red glow from these large dishes completing the barbaric splendour of the place. For the rest, there was a good deal of Moorish metal- and ivory-work about; but there was not a picture nor an engraving on the walls, nor a book nor a newspaper anywhere.

Presently a door opened, and Hilton Clarke appeared.

"How are you, Fitzgerald? Glad to see you."

There was a moment's pause.

"Oh, will you excuse me for a second?"

As he disappeared into the bedroom again, a mighty qualm shot to the heart of young Fitzgerald. His host was in evening dress. He glanced at the table, which was laid out for four; no doubt the other two guests would be in evening dress also! The mere thought of it was agony. It was not that they might consider him a country bumpkin; it was that they might think him failing in due respect to themselves. He had had no idea that London men of letters lived like this. Even if he had brought his rusty old suit of evening dress from Ireland, he would probably never have thought of putting it on to go to dinner at a bachelor's rooms. He wished himself a hundred miles away from the place. He ought never to have accepted an invitation to meet great people, until he had himself done something. It served him right for his presumption. And would they think it was out of disrespect? Would it be better for him to explain and apologise? Or to make some excuse now, and get rapidly away?

In a very few minutes his host appeared again—in morning costume.

"I think you're right, Fitzgerald," he said carelessly, as he flung himself into an easy-chair. "A shooting-coat will be more comfortable; it's got quite chilly to-night."

Fitzgerald's heart leapt up with gratitude. Was not this, he asked himself, the action of a true gentleman—an action prompted by an instinctive courtesy quick to take into consideration the feelings of others? He was half-inclined to be angry with Kitty—poor Kitty, who was so far away! But he would write to her: he would challenge her to say whether this little bit of courtesy, trifling as it might appear, was not a safe indication of character.

And it must be confessed that Kitty was quite wilfully wrong when she refused to perceive that her lover's new acquaintance was handsome, and even distinguished-looking. He was a man of about thirty, tall, sparely built; his head well set on square shoulders, his features refined and pensive somewhat, with eyes of a clear light blue and calm and contemplative; blond hair and beard (which he wore somewhat long), and hands of extreme whiteness and

elegance. His beautifully-shaped nails, indeed, occupied a good deal of his attention; and as he now lay back in the easy-chair he was contemplating them rather than the young man he was addressing.

"There are some pretty things in the room, aren't there?" he said in a tone of indifference, though he still regarded his nails with care. "They are a bit too violent in colour for me. I like repose in a room. But the capitalist will be impressed."

"I beg your pardon?" said Fitzgerald (how glad he was about that business of the shooting-coat!).

"Oh," he continued, in the same indifferent kind of way, "I forgot I hadn't told you. There's a man coming here to-night who has too much money. It isn't right for a man to have so much money. I think I can induce him to risk a little of it in a journalistic venture—I think so; I don't know; the thing looks to me promising enough. Only I thought my capitalist would be impressed with a little grandeur; and so I rented these rooms for a time. I don't want you to think that all that scarlet and red pottery kind of thing is what I should prefer. I like repose in a room, as I say; something to quiet the eyes when you are tired. Then the other man you will meet —oh, I told you—Gifford. What a comical old cock he is!"

Fitzgerald could scarce credit his ears. The editor of the *Liberal Review* to be spoken of in this familiar and patronising way.

"The odd thing is," continued Hilton Clarke, as he slowly opened and shut a pencil-case with his beautiful long nails, "that he has been able to get round about him a lot of writers who are exactly like himself, or who pretend to be. They are all fearfully in earnest; and dogmatic about trifles; making the most profound discoveries in new poets, new actresses, new politicians; always professing to be exceedingly accurate, and never able to quote three figures without a blunder. The whole thing is comical; but the public believe them to be so sincere. To me they seem to be continually wandering in a fog; and one stumbles against a lamp-post, and shrieks out:

'My gracious goodness, if this isn't the greatest genius of a poet since the time of Byron!' and another tumbles on to the pavement, where a beggar has been drawing chalk pictures, and there's a wild cry from him too: 'Heaven preserve my poor senses if this isn't Carpaccio come back again. How can I express my emotion but in tears!' I am told Gifford's last theory is that political disturbances have the same origin as terrestrial disturbances; the earth suffering from a surfeit of electricity, don't you know, or some such thing, and firing off one half of it as an earthquake at Valparaiso, and the other half of it, at the same moment, as an insurrection among the Poles. Different forms of gas, I suppose. I wonder, when a number of the *Liberal Review* is published here, what portentous explosion takes place at the other side of the world. But there's one good point about old Gifford; he is always very frank in apologising for his blunders. You generally find him saying: 'Last week we inadvertently mentioned Lord Russell as having been principally concerned in the Abolition of the Corn Laws. Of course every one must have seen that we meant the Duke of Wellington.' And then the following week, 'We last week, by a slip of the pen, attributed the establishment of Free Trade to the Duke of Wellington; every one must have seen that we meant Sir Robert Peel.' I only hope he'll take it into his head to discover a mare's nest in this new weekly I am thinking of, and give us a flaming article about it; it's all a toss-up whether he does or not."

Fitzgerald heard all this with dismay; and even with a trifle of pain. He was a born hero-worshipper; and for this unknown editor, whose opinions he had reverenced for many a year, he had a very high regard indeed. It was almost shocking to hear him spoken of as a comical person. But the truth was that Fitzgerald did not understand that there was a spice of revenge in this tirade uttered so negligently. Only that morning it had happened that a good-natured friend had repeated to Mr. Hilton Clarke something that had been said of him by Mr. Gifford. The good-natured friend did not in the least mean to make mischief; it was only a little joke; and indeed there was nothing

very terrible in what Mr. Gifford had said. "Clarke? Hilton Clarke, do you mean? Oh, he is the sort of man who writes triolets, parts his hair down the middle, and belongs to the Savile Club." Now there is no one of these things absolutely criminal; in fact, a man might commit them all and still be recognised as an honest British citizen. Only, Mr. Hilton Clarke did not like to be ticketed and passed on in that way; and so he took his earliest opportunity of revenge.

He looked at his watch.

"Five minutes past eight," he said. "Twenty minutes late already. I never wait more than a quarter of an hour for anybody; so we will have dinner. Fiammetta! Hola! —Fiammetta!"

There was no answer, so he touched a little silver-handled bell near him; and the tall dark-eyed woman—she seemed to have been very beautiful at one time, Fitzgerald thought, as he now had a better look at her—made her appearance.

"L'on n'arrive pas; faîtes servir."

"Bien, m'sieur."

But at the same moment there was a noise outside in the passage; and very shortly afterwards Fiammetta ushered in two gentlemen. The first, who was rubbing his hands, and looking very cheerful, was a portly, rubicund, blond person, whose short yellow moustache and whiskers looked almost white as contrasted with his round, red, shining face; he wore one blazing diamond as a stud; and his boots shone almost as brilliantly as the diamond did. Him Fitzgerald instantly dismissed as of no account, and concentrated his eager interest on the next comer, who was certainly of more striking appearance. He was a man of middle height, of powerful build; his face sallow; his hair jet black and unkempt; his features strong, and yet keen and intellectual; his eyes so very clear, in the midst of a dark face, that they resembled the eyes of a lion. The general impression you would have gathered from his look was that he was an intellectually powerful man, but unduly aggressive; though this impression was modified by his voice which was pleasant, and by his laugh which was delightful.

After the usual apologies and introductions, and when Hilton Clarke had expressed his regret that these two guests should have taken the trouble to come in evening dress (if Kitty had only seen how nicely that was done!) they sat down to the little square table; and Fiammetta—having handed round a dish containing caviare, olives stuffed with sardines, and similar condiments, offered to each of the guests his choice of liqueurs. As Fitzgerald had never heard any of the names before—and as he was far more interested in his companions than in the ministrations of the soft-eyed and velvet-footed Fiammetta—he absently answered "Yes, if you please," and did not even look at the reddish-coloured fluid that was poured into his glass. A minute afterwards he was brought to his senses. Having observed the results of certain Coursing Club dinners at Inisheen, he had long ago vowed to himself never to touch spirits of any kind; and he had faithfully kept his vow. But he never imagined that this reddish fluid could be anything else than wine; and not particularly liking the oily taste of the caviare, he thought he would remove it by drinking this glass. The next moment he was convinced that the roof of his head was off, and his throat on fire. He hastily gulped down some water; fortunately he did not choke; no one noticed; and by-and-by, somewhat panting, and very red in the face, he was enabled to resume his attitude of respectful and eager attention.

The conversation was entirely confined to Hilton Clarke and Mr. Gifford; Mr. Scobell, the capitalist, being a most valiant trencher-man, minded his own business. And indeed for some time the remarks on affairs of the day and on the doings of public men were somewhat obvious and commonplace, if one may dare to say so; although here and there occurred a suggestion that these two men had very different ways of looking at things. However, all the assertion was on the side of Mr. Gifford, whenever any disputable subject was approached. His host did not care to contradict. He would rather make some little facetious remark, or shrug his shoulders. Gifford's attitude was one of conviction and insistence; Clarke's might have been summed up in the word "*connu.*" When the leonine

gentleman was vehemently declaring that the laureate's last volume, which had been published that very week, was a masterpiece; that never before had he written anything so consistently dramatic in its conception, so musical in its lyrics, so pathetic in its tragedy; and that in consequence life seemed to have had something added to it within these last few days, his host remarked—while carefully looking for bones in the red mullet—"Oh, yes, it is a pleasant sort of poem."

But, by dire mishap, they blundered into the American Civil War, which was then a topic of more recent interest than it is now. At first the remarks were only casual, and perhaps also not profoundly novel.

"At all events," said Hilton Clarke at last, "there is one point on which everybody is agreed—that the Southerners have the advantage of being gentlemen."

"The gentlemen of the Salisbury stockade—the gentlemen of Andersonville!" retorted his opponent, with a flash in the deep-set gray eyes.

"And they fought gallantly, too, until they were beaten back by the undisciplined crowds that poured down on them—flung at them, indeed, by reckless generals, who knew no more of the art of war than they did of common humanity. Of course, if you have every advantage of men and money and war-material——"

But this was like the letting in of waters. Even Mr. Scobell looked up. For the *Liberal Review* had been a warm partisan of the North during the war; and Mr. Gifford had written nearly all of the war articles himself, so that his information, whether precisely accurate or not, was of mighty volume, and down it came on the head of his opponent like a cataract. All the campaigns had to be fought over again: now they were investing Vicksburg; now they were marching through Georgia; now they were at Five Forks. Hilton Clarke appeared to have gone away somewhere; he was scarcely heard amid all this thunder. At times, it is true, he would utter some scornful taunt, not levelled at the North only, but at North and South combined; for indeed he might well be confused by all the gunpowder smoke and noise. But even here he was not

safe; for, having incidentally remarked that it was not worth disputing about, "for after all," he said, "there are only two kinds of Americans, plain and coloured, and for my part I prefer the coloured variety," he was immediately pursued by his relentless enemy, who upbraided him for making use of those idle little quips and taunts that made such mischief between countries. The flippant article was very easy to write, and the writer pocketed his three guineas; and then it went out and was quoted all over America as an expression of English jealousy. He undertook to say that Clarke had never been in America; he undertook to say that he had never known twenty Americans in the whole course of his life——

Now there is no saying how far this discussion might have gone or how fierce it might have become; but Mr. Scobell made a remark. And when a capitalist speaks, literary persons are silent.

"I was once in America," he said.

There was a pause.

"Oh, indeed," said Mr. Gifford, regarding him with interest.

"Yes?" said his host, with a pleasant and inquiring smile.

But it appeared that that was all. He had contributed his share to the conversation; and accordingly he returned to his plate. Moreover, what he had contributed was valuable; it was actual fact, which there was no gainsaying.

But whatever interest this dispute may have had for young Fitzgerald as indicative of the characters of the disputants (that is to say, supposing him to have had the audacity to attempt to take the measure of two such distinguished men), what followed turned out to have a far more immediate and personal importance for him. The champagne, which had been rather long in coming, had now been passed round twice by the soft-footed Fiammetta; a mellower atmosphere pervaded the room; Mr. Gifford was laughing pleasantly at a little joke of his host's; and the round, clear, staring eyes of the capitalist—whose face, by the way, had grown even a little redder, so that the short yellow-white whiskers, and moustache, and eyebrows looked as if they were afire—beamed in the most benign

manner on all and sundry. This was the time chosen by Mr. Hilton Clarke to unfold the journalistic scheme which had been the *fons et origo* of this little dinner-party.

"You see, I want your advice, Gifford," he said, "and Mr. Scobell won't mind my repeating some details that he and I have gone over together. What I propose is a shilling weekly—addressed to the wealthier classes, of course, but rather with a view to country-houses. However, I should publish at three o'clock on Saturday, so that London people could have the magazine by post, while the country people would get it in their Sunday morning bag. There might be a summary of Reuter's telegrams up to the latest hour on Saturday; otherwise, no news; and above all no politics. The prominence given to politics in English newspapers is founded on a delusion—wait a minute, Gifford; let me have my scheme out. I say that the space given to politics in the newspapers is out of all proportion to the interest taken in politics by any ordinary English household. Outside political circles—I mean, apart from those who are actually concerned in politics or in writing about them—take any household you like, and for one who is deeply interested in politics you will find four who don't care a brass farthing about them. Well, I propose to address the four. But even the fifth, mind you, though he may imagine himself responsible for the Empire, might have anxious thoughts as to whether he should take such and such a deer-forest in Scotland for the autumn, or whether he should hire a steam-yacht and take his family for a cruise about the Channel Islands, or whether, supposing he took such and such a country-house from October till Christmas, there would be as many pheasants this year as figured in last year's bag, and so on; and he might be very glad, on the Sunday morning, to sit down with his after-breakfast cigar, in the verandah, you know, and study this honest shilling counsellor——"

"Oh," said Gifford. "That kind of thing. But there is the *Field*; there is *Land and Water*——"

"Pardon me, this will be quite different," said Hilton Clarke, composedly. "I propose to have a series of agents —yachting men, sportsmen, anglers, and all the rest of it—

who will at their leisure send in faithful and unadorned descriptions of anything they find that is worth having; so that Paterfamilias, instead of reading advertisements that he can't believe, will have a lot of things offered to him—a brace of perfectly disciplined setters, a thoroughbred hunter, half a mile of salmon-fishing in Ireland, a shooting-box in the Highlands, anything, in short, connected with those delightful dreams of holidays that fill up the idle time on Sundays with so many folk—and he will know that he can safely depend on these being as they are described. In fact, I don't know that we might not have a number of supernumerary agents; so that a man, writing to the office, could have one of these sent on commission, and so make sure, for example, that the fine bag he had heard of as having been made last year on a particular shooting did not mean that the outgoing tenant had cleared every head of game off the place. The difficulty will be to get perfectly trustworthy agents; *we* shall be above suspicion; for we shall take no fees, no commissions. The men must be well paid——"

"Right," said Mr. Scobell, and there was instant attention. But that was all. He looked from one to the other in silence; he had said all he had thought it necessary to say.

"My dear Gifford, not an ortolan?" Hilton Clarke observed with calm surprise. "Fitzgerald, pass the Burgundy—gently, man!" he added, in a tone of displeasure, for Fitzgerald had gripped the basket with his muscular fingers as if it were the stock of a breechloader. "And for this section," he continued, "of course what is wanted is a good sub-editor, who will put the reports into decent English, and who won't let the printers make a fool of us. Besides, he must know something of out-of-door sports—he must know a good deal more than *I* do—or we shall be made ridiculous. I think it was rather lucky, then, that I ran against my friend Fitzgerald here, for if you can persuade him, Mr. Scobell, to take the place, he is the very man for it. He has burned powder in those desolate Irish bogs, and I know he can dress a fly. And then, you see, Fitzgerald, it needn't take up anything like the whole of your time. You might be going on with more purely

literary work quite independently of it. What do you say? —or would you rather consider?"

"Oh, I should be very glad," stammered Fitzgerald, with his face about as red as Mr. Scobell's. "It is very kind of you—I—I don't know whether I could do the work—but I should try my best, anyway——"

"Oh, that's all right," said Hilton Clarke, coolly. "I daresay you know more about it than I do. As to terms, perhaps this isn't the place to discuss these details——"

But here Mr. Scobell broke in. Here he had a right to speak; and here he was on solid ground.

"I leave that in your hands, Clarke. I leave that to you entirely. I want the paper well done. I want it to be a gentlemanly paper. I don't want to go into my Club and have a man come up to me and say, 'Scobell, what d—d Radical trash that is in your paper. I wonder you'd own a d—d Radical paper.' I want it to be a gentlemanly paper; and I am willing to pay for it. I want it to be well printed, on good paper; I want it to be a gentlemanly-looking paper; I don't want, when I go into sassiety, to have people speaking of me as the owner of a d—d Radical print."

"Oh, of course not—of course not," said Hilton Clarke, somewhat hastily. "There will be no politics. But we must have a name. I have bothered my head for the last fortnight about it. You see, I must have it known that the paper is for Sunday morning, or for Sunday; but everything I have tried suggests the *Sunday at Home* or the *Day of Rest*, or something like that. I thought of the *Sunday Morning Cigar;* but then everybody doesn't smoke. The *After-Breakfast Cigar, a Sunday Paper;* that has the same objection. The *Country Gentleman's Guide;* that is too long; besides, I want to appeal to the whole household; and to town households also. Well, we must consider that by-and-by."

"If I were you, I would call it *Jeshurun*," said Mr. Gifford. "It seems to me you are addressing those who have waxed fat; and taking account only of the most material and vulgar luxuries. There is not a word of any intellectual requirements——"

"Oh, I beg your pardon," his host said. "I have only described one section to you. I mean to take the literary section under my own care. Of course we shall have essays, touching here and there on sport, perhaps; but also meant to have an interest for the ladies in the house. A short story now and again, if possible; but it is difficult to get them good; it might be better to have some French novel—such as *Monsieur de Camors*—translated, and use that as a serial. An occasional bit of verse, too, or a *ballade*, touching affairs of the day. Professor Jewel has offered me a series of translations from Horace partly adapted to modern affairs; but I am afraid that has been done too often."

"Don't touch them," said Gifford, with decision. "Horace is as fatal to translators as Heine. Both are quite unmanageable. Look how Milton made a fool of himself with the fifth Ode."

"What?" said Mr. Scobell, in a loud voice; and even Fitzgerald stared.

"Come, you must not speak slightingly of the equator," Hilton Clarke said, with a laugh.

"Oh, but I do say it is the very worst translation ever made from Horace, or from anybody else," Mr Gifford insisted. "It is not a question of degree. I say it is the very worst translation ever made from anything; for it starts with the primary defect of being absolutely unintelligible. Do you mean to tell me that anybody unacquainted with the original could make the slightest sense out of it?—

> 'Who now enjoys thee credulous, all gold;
> Who always vacant, always amiable,
> Hopes thee, of flattering gales
> Unmindful!'

Gracious heavens! And then the measure—

> 'Who now enjoys thee credulous, all gold!'

I should like to see a schoolboy try to make that scan; to say nothing of 'credulous, all gold' certainly leaving in the mind the impression that, if anybody is all gold, it is not Pyrrha at all but the credulous youth. Now the gentleman who translated Gretchen's song thus :—

'My peace is gone,
My heart is sore,
I find him never
And nevermore,'

erred in the other direction, for he wanted to make it quite clear what poor Gretchen was sorrowing about, and only took a liberty with a little *sie*."

"But what do you think of this project now, Gifford?" said Hilton Clarke, as he handed round cigars, coffee being on the table.

Mr. Gifford took a cigar, lay back in his chair, and passed his hand through the thick masses of his raven-black hair.

"Not much," said he, firmly. "You are combining opposed tastes. Sportsmen are not as a rule fond of intellectual pursuits. Where you find the library in a country-house turned into a gunroom, there will be more newly-made cartridges than newly-published books about. A combination of Colonel Hawker and Joseph Addison——"

"But, my dear fellow, you don't seem to see that I am addressing different persons. I am addressing the whole household—the father who wants to invite Lord Somebody or other to shoot with him over a thoroughly well-preserved moor in Scotland; the eldest son who hunts; the younger son, who wants to cut a dash at Cowes; the mamma who has her eye on several parties she could make up if only she had a pleasant country-house for the winter; the young ladies who would be curious about a translated French novel, as they are forbidden to read such things in the original. You see I am appealing to the whole household——"

"Call it the *Household Magazine*, then," said Gifford, with a laugh.

"I will. Thanks," said Hilton Clarke, calmly, as he took out a beautifully-bound little note-book. "At least that is better than anything I have thought of as yet."

And so Master Willie was installed as the sub-editor of a shilling weekly magazine. But that was not the only event of the evening, so far as concerned himself. After talking about many things, until the gorgeous colours of

the chamber were pretty well subdued by a haze of pale blue tobacco smoke, they chanced to touch on a novel which had just then been published by a gentleman holding a subordinate place in Her Majesty's Government. Rather, it had been published some weeks before, anonymously; and no notice had been taken of it: now, however, a second edition was announced, with the name of the Right Honourable Spencer Tollemache, M.P., on the title-page. Then editors had to begin and overhaul the piles of books put aside as adjudged not worth a review, and so "Daphne's Shadow" came to the front again.

"Curious idea for Spencer Tollemache to write a novel," said Hilton Clarke. "His 'History of the '32 Reform Bill' was very well spoken of."

"Ah; light literature—relaxation—relaxation," said Mr. Scobell, smiling blandly,—"relaxation from the cares of state."

Gifford darted an almost angry glance at him.

"Light literature?" he said, somewhat too scornfully. "I suppose you mean light literature as distinguished from the heavy literature that sinks? My dear Mr. Scobell, where are the politicians of the time of Homer? Where are the learned treatises *they* wrote? It seems to me that light literature—imaginative literature—pure story-telling—absolute fiction—is the only really permanent thing of man's invention in the world. The Siege of Troy, the Wanderings of Ulysses, the Arabian Nights, Shakespere's plays, Don Quixote, Robinson Crusoe, the Vicar of Wakefield—more than that, the children's fairy tales that have an antiquity beyond anything that can be guessed at—all pure fiction—these are the things that remain; these are the things that the whole world treasures; while your heavy literature sinks into the bog."

He was quite as vehement about this chance topic as he had been about the American War.

"You may call them will-o'-the-wisps, if you like; they are not to be caught and cooked; but they remain to delight the curiosity and imagination of men, flickering and beautiful; while far more useful works—solid and substantial works—have gone down into the morass and the

centuries have closed over them. People see too much of the meaner side of what is around them; they wish to hear of nobler things; they like a touch of rose-colour, of the wonderful, the supernatural—added to the common things of life. If a child had never been told about fairies, it would invent fairies. And you talk of Spencer Tollemache as turning to this kind of work for relaxation? Perhaps he may. I never read his History of the Reform Bill; but if he thinks it easier to create imaginary human beings and give them definite and natural form, and make them the brothers and sisters and intimate friends of the people who are actually alive in the world, if he thinks it is easier to do that than to go to Parliamentary reports and Blue-books and get together a useful compilation of easily-ascertained facts, then perhaps he may find himself mistaken. Perhaps he has already found himself mistaken. By Jove, it's eleven o'clock."

Good luck seemed to pursue Fitzgerald this evening. When Mr. Scobell drove away in his carriage, the remaining two guests left together on foot; and as they walked along Piccadilly, Mr. Gifford must needs continue talking about the Under Secretary's novel and the capitalist's chance remark. You may imagine that young Fitzgerald was in no hurry to interrupt him. To be walking with Mr. Gifford was a sufficient honour; to listen to this vehement, combative, and occasionally brilliant and incisive talk was something that the provincial sub-editor had never dared to hope for in this world. They walked all the way to Sloane Street (Master Willie would have kept on to Jerusalem, had not his companion stopped), when Mr. Gifford said to him—

"You live in the Fulham Road, you said? My rooms are close by here. I have been thinking now that if you didn't mind trying your hand at a review of that novel I was speaking of, you might let me have it by Thursday night. Hilton Clarke showed me some things of yours. You are on the right road; don't fall in with that affected indifferentism; you'll find too much of it in London. Remember Bishop Blougram:

> 'What can I gain on the denying side?
> Ice makes no conflagration.'

Your writing isn't quite clean enough yet. You go round about. You don't hit the nail sharp and have done. No matter; if you like to try your hand, you may have the book."

"But—" said Fitzgerald, almost deprived of breath, "—but you don't mean for the *Liberal Review?*"

"Of course I do."

Now if at this moment the pavement at the corner of Sloane Street had opened, and if Master Willie had beheld there a subterranean procession of Don Fierna and all his array of elves—passing along in blue fire through grottoes of felspar gemmed with rubies and diamonds—he could not have been more astounded. That he should be asked to write for the *Liberal Review;* and to write about a book, too, that was at the moment occupying so much of the attention of the public! He could scarcely find words to express his sense of his companion's great kindness, and of his own fears about his being unable to undertake such a task.

"But I don't say I will use the article, mind," said Mr. Gifford, good-naturedly. "I will give you the chance, if you will take the risk. It may be some training for you, in any case. If you call or send to the office to-morrow you will find the book waiting for you. Good-night. Glad to have met you."

* * * *

Was Kitty awake yet? Could she hear the news? Could she tell how high his heart was beating?—poor Kitty, who was so far away at Inisheen!

CHAPTER III.

A FIRST CAST.

FITZGERALD did not get to sleep soon that night. As he walked rapidly away down the Fulham Road it seemed to him as if five-and-thirty different ways of beginning this fateful review were pressing in on his mind, and that he had lost all power to decide which was preferable. If he could have seen but the first page of the novel, it might have given him some clue, perhaps. But here he was eagerly and anxiously sketching out plans for reviewing a book of the contents of which he was wholly ignorant; and it appeared to him as if his brain had got the better of him altogether and was running ahead in this aimless, distracted, and fruitless fashion quite independently of his control.

At length he reached a dimly-lit little courtyard in the Fulham Road, on one side of which stood a plain two-storied building. The ground-floor consisted of a large studio; the upper floor served as a bedroom, and that Fitzgerald had secured as his lodging. He went carefully up the outside stair; unlocked the door; lit a match and then a lamp; and here he was in the middle of a fairly large low-roofed apartment, somewhat scantily furnished, but quite sufficiently so for all his wants. The floor was for the most part bare: and here and there was a bit of faded Turkey carpet or a withered old rug which had most likely been flung out from the studio below as being even too worn and decayed for painting purposes.

It was a fine place to think in, for there were few temptations in the way of luxury about; and he had

plenty to think of. The projected magazine; Kitty's surprise on hearing the good news; the wonderful evening he had just spent, and the strange contrast between the two great men; nay, precise conversation of which he could remember every word—all these things were enough to occupy him; but nearer than any of them came this pressing matter of the review. What a chance it was! And they said that London was an unfriendly city! Now it could not be any interest in salmon-flies that had led Mr. Gifford to place this opportunity before one who was quite unknown to him. True, Mr. Gifford had seen certain excerpts from the *Cork Chronicle* which Mr. Hilton Clarke had asked to be entrusted with (*N.B.* What would Kitty say to this? Was not that the act of a friend?), but Fitzgerald had a great distrust of himself; he had not regarded these things as of much value; and certainly he had never thought they would entitle him to have the chance given him of contributing to the *Liberal Review*.

At this moment all his thinking went clean out of his head; for there was a tremendous noise below—the noise of a powerful raucous bass voice that bellowed, or rather that rattled with the rattle of small drums—

"*Should auld acquaintance be forrrrr-got.*"

"There's that brute begun again," said Fitzgerald to himself, with a groan.

But the brute, whoever he was, seemed to have no intention of continuing the song. There was a dead silence, in the course of which Fitzgerald speedily recovered his thoughts again.

And first of all he was determined that, if the book gave him any fair excuse, the review should be a friendly and good-natured one. For he had carefully noted certain remarks (what had he not carefully noted during that momentous evening?) that Mr. Gifford had addressed to Hilton Clarke with regard to the projected magazine.

"For one thing, my friend," Mr. Gifford had said, bending his keen eyes on the tall blond-bearded gentleman opposite him, "I would advise you, in going over to this new thing, to leave behind you the affected pessimism of

the *Weekly Gazette*" (this was a weekly journal to which Mr. Hilton Clarke was understood to contribute). "That continual belittling of things; that continual discontent with everything that turns up in politics or literature or art, does not pay. It is not wise. When the public find you always discontented, always looking at the hopeless side of things, always declaring that everything is going to the bad, they begin to suspect that you have reason for this discontent—in other words that your circulation is decreasing. Now that is a fatal impression. Besides people will not read a paper that fills them with gloom. Nor can you bully the public with impunity. It is no use attacking them, and scolding them, or treating them with scorn and contempt. You see, the public have simply to leave you unread, and that is a terrible business; for then, you perceive, you cannot hurt them, but they do hurt you."

"I should have thought," said Hilton Clarke, with a gentle smile, "that the circulation of the *Weekly Gazette* was somewhat bigger, a little bit bigger, than that of the *Liberal Review*."

"Yes; no doubt, no doubt," said the other, cheerfully, "though I am in hopes of seeing their relative positions reversed some day. But that is my advice to you. That tone of disappointment with everything makes people begin to think that you are not getting on as well as you might be; and that is very bad. Then the advertisers. Mind you, the advertisers are also vertebrate animals, and they make up a considerable proportion of the public. And if you go on from week to week declaring that British tradesmen are universally swindlers, that railway directors should be indicted for wilful murder, and so forth, mind you, your advertising agent may have a bad time of it. Say he goes into a big cutlery place in Oxford Street. The foreman goes up to the master, 'Here is the advertisement man from the *Weekly Gazette*, sir; he wants us to take the outside page next week.' Then very likely the cutler may turn round and say, 'The *Weekly Gazette* be hanged! Tell him that swindling isn't paying well just now, and we can't advertise. Swindlers, indeed! Swindlers themselves! The *Weekly Gazette* be hanged!'"

Now this advice, though it seemed to young Fitzgerald at the time to be not quite in accordance with the *ruat cælum* principles professed by the *Liberal Review* (which was a very courageous, and vehement, and plain-spoken organ), nevertheless appeared to him to be sound and sensible. Accordingly he now resolved that, if the merits of the book permitted it at all, he would treat it in the most friendly fashion. Instead of scourging him with rods from out the groves of Academe, the *Liberal Review* would take this new disciple by the hand and encourage him, and bid him be of good cheer. Or what, if the book were very good indeed, and altogether beyond need of patronage? Then let literature be congratulated on this new adhesion! Fitzgerald remembered that the *Liberal Review* was rather fond of making discoveries. No reviews of the book, at least of any importance, had appeared, though people were talking enough about it. Might not he be the first to announce the advent of a new power in literature? If he only had the book—here—at once—

"*And never brought to mind?*"

—again came the giant roar from below. And what a tenacious memory the musician must have, was Fitzgerald's first thought; ten minutes certainly having elapsed since he sang the first line. And surely there must be some shaft or opening in the floor, otherwise the sound could not come through in such volume? And what if perchance that shaft should be over the musician's head, on which a bucket of water might be made to descend suddenly at the next bellow?

But there was to be no more bellowing—except, indeed, a verse of the National Anthem, which Fitzgerald had already learned to recognise as the token that the artist was about to retire for the night, pleased or not, as the case might be, with his work. "*G-o-o-o-d sa-ave the Qu-e-e-n!*" roared the deep bass voice in dying cadence: then there was a curious clamping and shuffling, as if some one were doing a heel-and-toe step on a wooden floor; then silence. Either the artist was having a final pipe, or he had gone to bed.

Next morning eleven o'clock was the earliest hour at which Fitzgerald deemed it fitting he should go to the office of the *Liberal Review* for the book; and even then he did not think it probable that Mr. Gifford could have sent a message so soon. To his surprise, however, there the precious parcel was awaiting him; and so eager was he to see what sort of material this was on which he was to operate, that the moment he got on the top of the first passing Fulham omnibus he hastily undid the parcel, put two volumes in his pocket, and proceeded to cut the leaves of the other. He glanced over the first page or two—very good; a sort of playful introduction; light, facetious, well written; in short, a clever little essay about a country-house and its guests in the hunting season. But the reviewer was more anxious to get to the people; and these turned out to be, in the first instance, the three daughters of a Duchess, who were at the same moment in their respective dressing-rooms and each imparting confidences to her maid. It was ingeniously arranged that these confidences should be reported in turn; and there was a very comical similarity among them, seeing that they all referred to a youthful marquis of vast possessions who was to arrive at the house that evening, and to the probable effect on him of certain costumes and styles of dressing the hair.

Now Fitzgerald knew a great deal more about the habits of a "stand" of golden plover than about the ways and speech of Duchess's daughters; but he soon began to form the impression, and much to his disappointment, that all this artificial talk, clever as it might be, was entirely impossible in the circumstances. Nay, he began to feel just a touch of resentment that three young Englishwomen of good birth and breeding should have been represented as exhibiting themselves, to their own domestics, as so many flippant and giggling barmaids. It is true that Fitzgerald's father kept a small country hotel (and even that he did unsuccessfully), but the Fitzgeralds of Inisheen were an old family, and had always been held of consequence in that part of Ireland; Master Willie had been accustomed all his life to be addressed as "yer honour" when out over bog and hill in search of game; and was himself possessed

of not a little faith in the virtues of lineage and good blood. And was it possible, he almost indignantly asked himself, that any three young Englishwomen of decent parentage and education—putting the Duchess out of the question altogether—should have so little self-respect as to make confidantes of their maids in this fashion, and reveal their mean little schemes with the pertness of a soubrette in a fifth-rate farce?

He passed on, however, in hope. The marquis arrives just in time to be sent off to dress for dinner. Then the people of the neighbourhood who are coming to dine were introduced; and here there was some very fair humorous sketching of a light kind; Fitzgerald marking down one or two passages for approval. He read on and on—until he arrived at the courtyard. He read on and on (not so hopeful now) while his landlady brought him a chop, some bread, and a glass of ale, his mid-day meal. He scarcely paid heed to these things so busy was he with this book—so anxious to make something out of it—so disappointed at finding, with all the occasional smartness, the characters not flesh and blood creatures at all, but mere ghosts. The dry bones would not live. By four o'clock he had finished the book; and he laid it down with a sigh.

Yet out of it he had to make an article somehow; more than that, he was determined to have it done that very night, so that the editor of the *Liberal Review* should see that he could do his work promptly. So he set to work forthwith; and laboured and laboured away to make something out of the dry husks. Fortunately the bellowing gentleman beneath was absent; and he could work on in silence. The hours passed; he had a cup of tea. Finally, after much correction and re-writing, he had a piece of work put together which, if it did not form a highly interesting article, was, he thought, as fair a judgment of the book as he could give.

Just then, it being nearly nine o'clock, the last post brought him a letter, which he eagerly seized, for, though he had heard from Kitty that morning, might she not have taken it into her head—at the suggestion of her tender heart—to send him another little note by some strange means? But this turned out to be from his father.

"My dear Willie—That blackguard Maloney, the devil sweep him, won't renew the bill I told you of, and he's going to put his low scoundrel of a brother on to have the law of me if I don't have the £40 ready by Tuesday next. I have tried to raise the money, but devil the penny can I get of it. Have you any money you could spare? 'Tis a mean trick of Maloney's; sure many's the time I've helped his old grandfather when he hadn't as much clothes on his back as would have lifted the kettle from the fire. Bad luck to him, 'tis all because my Marshal MacMahon beat his old scarecrow of a Galloper at Drimoleague.

"Your affectionate father,

"Edward Fitzgerald."

Master Willie had arrived in London with £38 in his pocket; and that was the total of his worldly wealth. Had this letter come at any other moment it is possible he might have thought it hard he should have to part with that sum, or rather the greater part of it, to pay his father's Coursing Club debts. But what did he care for a few sovereigns when a fine career had just been opened before him, with no other than Kitty as the final crown and blushing and beautiful reward? Here was his first contribution to the *Liberal Review* ready to be deposited in the letter-box. To-morrow he was to see Mr. Hilton Clarke about the sub-editorship of the new magazine. And this morning what was the message, written in that sprawling but most lovable hand?—"O, Willie, darling, make haste and get on, and come back to me! And if your fine friend introduces you to any of the beautiful London ladies, just tell them there's a poor girl in Ireland that is breaking her heart for your sake." No; it was not at such a moment he was going to consider the question of a few pounds.

So he wrote—

"My dear Father—I have altogether now £38, of which I send you £30, for I must keep a small margin.

Then you can bring[1] my gun to Lord Kinsale's new agent (I forget his name), who offered me £6 for it when he knew I was going away. The other £4 you will make up somehow; but don't sell old Bess; she and I may still live to have another turn at the snipe some day. I think I have a good prospect here; more particulars by-and-by.

"Your affectionate son,

"WILLIAM FITZGERALD."

That letter, of course, he could not send off just then; the money had to be made transferable first. But here was this other one for Mr. Gifford—which from time to time he regarded with a qualm of anxiety, not quite certain that, after all, he had done his best. However, he resolved that it was now too late for doubt; he took it up; sallied forth into the night; sought out the nearest pillar letter-box; and there deposited the fateful packet. That decisive step once taken, his heart felt somewhat lighter. The night was fine, and he went on aimlessly wandering, along the gas-lit pavements; thinking of many things, but mostly of Inisheen, and perhaps most of all of an inland glen not far from there, and of running water, and of a certain moonlight night. Was not this Kitty's soft, low, trembling voice he could hear again in the silence?—"*My love I give to you; my life I pledge to you; my heart I take not back from you, while this water runs.*" And perhaps she also—far away there beyond the sea, up in the little room overlooking the wide sands—was recalling these words at this moment; and perhaps also shivering a little as she thought of Don Fierna and his elves?

It was nearly twelve o'clock when he returned to the dim little courtyard; and he was very tired; and perhaps the loneliness of this great dark world of London was beginning to weigh on him; so that he was glad to think of his escape into the realms of sleep (where Kitty was sometimes found walking about, with her soft black eyes laughing, and her voice as glad as ever). But, as it turned out, his adventures for that night were not just yet over.

[1] He meant "take." But Master Willie had not quite got rid of all his Irishisms, despite his study of the style of the *Liberal Review*.

CHAPTER IV.

A NEW ACQUAINTANCE.

FITZGERALD was just about to pass through the archway leading into the courtyard when he heard a sudden scuffling in front of him, and then a man's voice call out "Help! help! police!" Instinctively he paused, for he had no mind to enter into other people's squabbles; and besides he could not well see what was going on. But his appearance on the scene had no doubt produced some effect; for before he had time to think, a man dashed past him. Fitzgerald was in truth bewildered; he had been dreaming of Inisheen; not thinking of midnight robberies in London. And now he was inclined to let well alone, and thank God he was rid of a knave, when another dark figure dashed by—quite close by, indeed; and at the same moment he felt a sharp blow on his face. This was too much. This brought him to his senses. He did not know exactly where he had been struck; but he knew that his face was tingling; he knew that he had a stout oak staff in his hand, with a formidable knob at the end of it; and the next thing he knew was that he was in full chase down the Fulham Road, with the most un-Christian-like determination to give as good as he had got, or even better.

The first man had disappeared, but this one was just ahead; and Fitzgerald was well aware that his only chance was to overtake the fellow before he could dodge into some byway or corner. Now the thief, or burglar, or whoever he was, ran very well; but his muscles had not had that training over rock and heather that his pursuer's had; and

the consequence was, that in a very short space of time young Fitzgerald had so nearly overtaken his man (and was so fearful of letting him escape) that he aimed a blow at the back of the fellow's head with his stout oak staff. The next minute Master Willie had nearly fallen over the body of his prostrate foe; for down he had come, after that sounding whack, prone on the pavement, where he lay without a sign of life.

Then a third man came rushing up; and Fitzgerald faced about, feeling now rather angry, and inclined to have it out with the rogues of London generally. But he instantly perceived that this little bare-headed, red-bearded man, who now came wildly along, was no other than an artist whom he had once or twice observed going into the studio below his bedroom.

"You've got him?" he called out, in great excitement; "you've got one o' them?"

"Yes, I've got him," answered Fitzgerald, "and now I've got him, I'd like to know what to do with him."

"The scoundrels!" said the other, breathlessly. "If ye hadna come up, they'd have taken every penny I had on me. Eh, man," he added, staring at his rescuer, "did he hit ye?—your face is a' bluidy."

Fitzgerald had indeed felt something warm and moist about his cheek and chin; and when he had put his handkerchief up to his face he could see by the dim gaslight that he must have been bleeding pretty freely.

"Yes, he did; and I think I hit him too—unless he's shamming. You go and get a policeman; and I'll wait here by this fellow. If he becomes unruly I'll give him another taste of my *kipeen*."

The red-haired artist left rapidly, and in a few seconds returned not only with one, but two policemen whom he had found talking together, and into whose ears he was now pouring the whole story of how it had happened.

Just as they came up, the man on the pavement slowly raised himself on his knees, and began to rub the back of his head.

"Who done that?" he muttered, as if he were not quite awake.

Then he seemed to collect himself somewhat; he looked up and around; and perceiving the approaching policemen he uttered the one word "copped," and resigned himself to his fate.

"Why, it's the Cobbler as I'm alive," said one of the policemen, getting hold of him by the shoulder, and turning the apathetic face round to the gaslight. "He's been wanted ever since that job in the Cromwell Road."

"Now, look here, my good fellow," said the Scotchman, "I'm going to pick up my hat; I'm no going to the station at this time o' night. Ye maun take my name and address, and I'll come in the morning, and prefer the charge——"

"That'll do, sir; there's more nor one job agin this man."

"Off to the station, then, wi' the scoundrel; and don't lose your grip of him. If you, sir," he said, turning to Fitzgerald, "will walk back as far as my studio, I will give you a basin of water to wash your face in—it's the only way I can thank ye."

"Oh, but we are neighbours," said Fitzgerald. "I know you well enough. You are the man who makes such a frightful row with your Scotch songs."

"Eh! how do you know that?" said the other, sharply.

"Because my room is just over your studio."

"Bless me!—then you are the man that goes tramping up and down all night—tramp, tramp—tramp, tramp—then five minutes' rest—then tramp, tramp—tramp, tramp—up and down—man, I've always pictured ye as a sort of Eugene Aram, wringing your hands: I felt sure ye had murdered somebody. Or a hyena in a cage. What do ye gang on in that way for?"

"It's a bad habit, that is all."

"But what's your business?" said the other, bluntly.

"I write for newspapers."

"I did not think that was such hard work. It must cost ye a lot in shoe-leather," said the Scotchman, drily. "However, when I've got my hat, ye maun come in and have a glass; I was just getting back to my supper, when they scoundrels grippet me. I wish I had a candle. I'm thinking the police, now we've handed over to them such

a notorious creeminal, might give us another gas-lamp in this infernal dark yaird."

Without the aid of a candle, however, he soon picked up his hat; then he led the way into a hollow-sounding and apparently spacious room; lit the gas, and forthwith proceeded to get his companion some fresh water with which to wash his face. And while Fitzgerald, who found that the bleeding had proceeded merely from the nose, and that he was not cut at all, was performing that operation, the Scotchman, with a smartness which showed that he was familiar with the exigencies of camping out, had lit a little gas-stove, produced some tinned meat, and put a quite snow-white table-cloth on a small table, with some glasses, plates, knives, and forks.

"Now we'll have a bit of supper, and a crack," said he, "since we're neighbours. Will I make ye a dish of hot soup?—Five minutes will do it."

"Oh no, thank you," said young Fitzgerald, who was much taken with the frankness of this short, broad-shouldered, red-bearded, and keen-eyed person. "That tinned beef will do capitally for me. But what I should like better than anything," he said, casting his eyes round the big, gaunt, and dusty studio, which had very little furniture beyond the heaps of canvases all ranged with their faces to the wall, "would be to have a look at your pictures."

"My pictures?" said the other. "Oh yes. As ye're a newspaper-man, ye're no likely to be a buyer."

"You would rather not show them to a buyer, then?"

"There is nothing in the wide world I hate so much," —said the other, busying himself with the table,—"little experience as I have of it. I don't mind criticism—the sharper the more likely I am to get something out of it. But the valuation in money—that's what gangs against the grain. Come, sit down, man; ye're none the worse for the stroke on the nose. The water is near boiling already: and ye'll have a glass of toddy. Here's the bottle, and there's the sugar."

"Thank you; but I don't drink whisky."

"Hwhat!" shouted the red-bearded artist, nearly letting the bottle fall. "Hwhat d'ye say?——"

"But I've got some beer overhead. I will fetch some in a minute——"

"Gude preserve us, laddie; but if it's ale ye want, there's a bottle or two in the corner. What's your name, by the way?"

"Fitzgerald."

"Mine's Ross. John Ross. Fall to, man; there's no use wasting time over meat when there's a pipe and a glass o' toddy to follow."

Fitzgerald soon found out that he was excessively hungry, and as the cold beef and the bottled ale were alike excellent, he did ample justice to both, while with equanimity he submitted to be examined and cross-examined by this frankly downright acquaintance.

"You're one o' the lucky ones, I can see," said Ross, when Fitzgerald had told him how his literary prospects were. "Ye've fallen on your feet just at once. Here have I been in London near six years, and I havena sold as many pictures as I have sold in two seasons when I was pentin' in Perthshire in a caravan. But bless ye, what does it matter?" he continued with cheerful good-humour; "I have all the more pictures to sell when I do fall on my feet. I envy nobody, so long as I can get a crust of bread, for I reckon on my time coming."

"Of course if you were to get into the Academy, your pictures would have a great additional value, I suppose," Fitzgerald observed.

"The Academy?" said John Ross, with a stare. "Do ye mean me becoming a member of the Academy?"

"Of course. Isn't that the natural ambition of every artist?" said his new acquaintance.

"Oh, but that's luck beyond anything I'm thinking of," said the other imperturbably, as he proceeded to pour out some scalding hot water on a couple of lumps of sugar. "Just think of all the men there are pentin', and the chances of any one of them getting such a stroke of luck as that. No, no; all I hope for is that they who are in the Academy would be a bit friendly. If there's any one bears them a grudge, it's no me; if the chance happened my way, wouldn't I take it? and how can I blame them?

No; the bit of luck I hope for is to get a good place some day on the walls; and that is no easy, if you think of all the people who want to be hung. They did hang one o' mine last year, but it was away at the roof; so you see my line of luck is no clear before me yet, and yours is."

"But I have only the chance," said Fitzgerald. "Since I have come to London I haven't earned a penny, as far as I know."

"Hear till him! Man, ye've everything before ye. Ye've all the train nicely laid; ye've only to light the match, and *whaff* goes the pouther!"

By this time they had both lit their pipes, and John Ross went on to talk about his own art in a way that very soon astonished his companion. Whether he could paint or not was still, so far as his companion was concerned, an open question, but at least he could talk, and that in a manner that was quite surprising. His vague, rambling discourse, warming up now and again into enthusiasm, was really eloquent, in a curious, bizarre, happy-go-lucky kind of fashion; full of figures, of quick, happy illustrations; scornful at times, as he hit out right and left; and occasionally describing an object as if he had flashed a ray of sunshine on it. Fitzgerald was intensely interested, and could have gone on for ever listening; but at the same time he could not help wondering what the actual work was like of a man who was at one moment denouncing the Pre-Raphaelites for their worship of sadness, their archaic mannerisms, and their cast-iron hardness of form, and at the next denouncing the French landscape-artists for their fuzziness of detail, their trickiness, their evasion of daylight.

"It is not what I can do myself," he said at last, observing that Fitzgerald's eyes had strayed once or twice to the canvases; "it is what I know I should try to do. Suppose you want to paint a field of ripe corn: will ye get at it, do ye think, by sitting down and pentin' the stalks and the heads—ay, if ye were to spend a lifetime at it, and paint fifty thousand of them? Not one bit; if ye painted a hundred thousand of them as like as like could be, ye'd be no nearer getting at your cornfield. For what ye have to paint is what ye see; and when ye look at a cornfield ye see nae

single stalks at all, but a great mass of gold, as it were, with a touch of orange here, or paler yellow there, and a wash of green where the land is wet, and sometimes of warm red, even, where the stalks are mixed with weeds. And ye are no going to get that colour either by chasing the daylight out of the sky, and taking the thing into a room, and making a clever bit of a fuzzy French sketch in gray and green and black. That's easy—but it's no the cornfield. Ay, and there's more. Ye've got to paint more than ye see. Ye've got to put just that something into the cornfield that will make people's hearts warm to it when they see it on your canvas. Suppose that ye've been ill for a month or two; laid on your back, maybe, and sick tired of the pattern on the walls o' your room; and at last the day comes when the doctor thinks you might be lifted into a carriage and taken oot for a drive. And we'll say it's a fine warm afternoon, and your heart is just full of wonder and gladness, like, at the trees and the sunlight and the soft air; and we'll say that all of a sudden, at the turning o' the road, ye come in sicht of this field of ripe corn, just as yellow as yellow can be under the glow of the sky. Ay, and what is it when ye see such a wonderful and beautiful thing—what is it that brings the tears to your e'en? I say, what is it? For it's *that* ye've got to catch and put in your picture; or ye'll be a d—d mistake as a painter!"

Fitzgerald did not stay to ask him whether this was not demanding that the landscape-painter should possess the nervous system of an invalid (though, perhaps, something might be said even for that theory, as applied to all forms of art); he was much too interested to interrupt. But, by a singular chance, Ross drifted away from painting altogether. He was talking of the instinct for good colour that many people had, who had no artistic training whatsoever, and by accident he referred to fish and artificial flies, and so forth. Fitzgerald looked up suddenly.

"Are you a fisherman, too?" he said quickly.

"A wee bit. Are you?"

"I have thrown a fly," said Fitzgerald, modestly, and feeling in his pocket for a certain envelope.

"As I was saying, that's why I hold the salmon to be

the king o' fish. He knows good colour. It's no use trying him with your aniline dyes; yellow and scarlet and gold—that's what he watches for; whereas trout—ay, and even sea-trout, are a mean, depraved, magenta-minded race o' creatures. Man, I filled my basket last year in Perthshire wi' the most miserable puce things."

"But what was the colour?"

"Puce. A dirty, drab-lilac kind of thing it was. But that was naething to the fly that was recommended me for sea-trout in Argyleshire—ay, and it took too. Just think of this—the body arsenic green worsted, with a bit of white tinsel; the hackle a purple blue; and the wings—heaven knows where they came from, except it might have been from a hoodie crow—a heedjous gray, like the colour of a decayed corpse. Do ye think a salmon would have looked at such a thing?"

"Perhaps," said Master Willie, as he slowly drew out an envelope from his pocket and put it on the table, "this would be more to his liking?"

"Eh, man!" said Ross, drawing out the great flies in all their royal splendour of crimson silk, and yellow tinsel, and golden pheasant feathers. "Where got ye them?"

"I have been amusing myself making them for a friend—the man I told you about; I could not think of any other way of showing him I was sensible of his kindness."

"Ay, did ye make these yoursel'? Now that I think of it, ye dinna look as if ye had spent a' your life in a newspaper office."

"I have spent most of it tramping over wild bogs and on hillsides," said Fitzgerald, with a laugh. "A good deal more than I should have done."

"Shooting?"

"Yes."

"What sort?"

"Oh, mostly wild-fowl; teal, snipe, wookcock, and so on; chiefly in the winter."

"Hard work, then?"

But here the conversation went far afield; for there were descriptions of winter nights on the bog-land, and winter mornings on the hill, and wild adventures along the shore

in snow time or in the hard black frost. Even to Fitzgerald himself—who was pleased to see how interested his companion was in these reminiscences—it seemed that they were more picturesque now and here in London than when he had to get up shivering in the dark morning, and dress by candle-light, and sally forth through the silent street of Inisheen. He forgot the wet clothes in describing the view from the mountain-side outlooking to the sea. He forgot the mortification of misses in the glory of lucky finds. These days of sport that are lived over again in memory generally end with a heavy bag; and however tired and cold and wet and hungry the sportsman may have been in reality, he forgets all that, and remembers only the delight with which that heavy bag is thrown down in the hall, and the warm snug evening afterwards, when the dinner-things are removed, and chairs drawn to the fire, and the friendly tobacco begins to throw a charm over the soul.

Only once did Fitzgerald, who, it must be confessed, had enjoyed talking over these things, try to start his companion off again about painting. "Are you a sea painter?" he said. "Do you paint sea-pieces as well?"—and then he glanced again at the dusty gray canvases.

"I?" said Ross. "No, I should think not! Why it would break my heart. Other things are difficult enough; but that! Man, I see pictures of the sea at the Academy that just make one laugh. Every wave as accurately shaped and modelled as if it was cast out of melted cannon; every little turn of foam, as clean cut as a meerschaum pipe. God, the fellows must be cleverer than Joshua the son of Nun, for they must have got the sea as well as the sun and clouds to stand still. Did ever man's eyes see moving water like that? Moving water that is a constant distraction of lights and shifting shadows and forms—lightning touches you might say, so swift are they—all bewildering and glancing round ye; and *that* is what ye begin to cut and carve and stick on canvas as if it were slices of cream-cheese on the top o' green sealing-wax. No, no; it's bad enough inland. Even when ye get perfectly still shadows on a perfectly still loch, there's an oily kind of glisten that no pent-box is likely to get for ye. Eh, and such chances as

we had sometimes at the wild-fowl when we were camping out—that would have made your mouth water; ay, and at black game too. Nearly every morning when we went out to wash in the burn—that was when we had the caravan in Perthshire—I've seen them walking about without the least fear o' us. Maybe the old black cock would give a cluck-cluck of warning, but the hen and her brood scarcely heeded. Deed I once hit an old gray hen with a pent brush, as sure as death. And when, at last, the keeper lent me a gun and said I might shoot a bird once in a while—for our own cooking, ye ken, out I went as early as six o'clock——" So again they were back on the various adventures and experiences of shooting; recalling vivid rambles in other years, now in Inverness-shire, now on the desolate bog-lands near to Inisheen. And so interesting was this talk, that when Fitzgerald definitely rose to depart, at the hour of half-past four in the morning, he had almost forgotten that he had not seen his host's pictures.

"Pictures," said John Ross, with a laugh, "toots no, man, ye can see pictures any day, and better than mine. But I would like ye to come in whenever ye have half an hour, and smoke a pipe and let us know how ye are getting on."

"All right, I shall be delighted," said Fitzgerald, most heartily. "And I may learn something to-morrow—that is to say, if my nose has not become twice its natural size, in which case I shall keep indoors."

CHAPTER V.

THE BEGINNING OF A CAREER.

HOWEVER, there was no trace of the blow discoverable next day, and so on this fine May morning Fitzgerald set about the accomplishment of his various tasks. First of all he had to accompany his artist friend to the police station; though indeed he harboured no sentiment of revenge against the luckless Cobbler who had once more fallen into the clutches of the law. Then he proceeded to get the thirty pounds made transferable to Ireland. This, nevertheless, he did with some compunction. For, if he was to fight his way in London, was it fair to Kitty, who had entrusted her future to him, that he should thus throw away the sinews of war? Was it not running a tremendous risk to leave himself with only seven pounds before securing some definite work? But then on the other hand he had fair prospects before him; and he had the courage of two or three and twenty; besides, he was not going to allow that blackguard Maloney to triumph over his father, Coursing Club or no Coursing Club. And so he went and sent off the money, and then made his way to the Albany, where he had an appointment with Mr. Hilton Clarke. When Fiammetta showed him into the richly-coloured room, he found that gentleman reclining in a low easy-chair, in a voluminous dressing gown, a cigarette in one hand, a paper-covered novel in the other, while before him on the little table were the remains of a French breakfast.

"How are you, Fitzgerald?" he said, throwing aside the book. "Sit down and have some coffee and a cigarette.

No? You'll find that Chartreuse worth trying. Well, and what did you think of the great Gifford? Was the godlike man up to your expectations?"

"I was very much interested," said Fitzgerald, rather timidly, for indeed he did not like the way in which Mr. Hilton Clarke spoke of the literary calling and of its professors, whilst he did not wish to show the presumption of putting himself into antagonism with one who was so much his superior. "I have always had a great regard for the *Liberal Review*, and—of course, I never thought I should ever meet the Editor. I haven't seen you to thank you for giving me such a chance—perhaps you don't quite understand what it is to a young fellow who has only heard of well-known men. I—I thought it was a great honour."

"Oh, you will soon get rid of all that modesty," said the other. "It is a useless article in London."

"We walked home together," continued Fitzgerald, "as far as Sloane Street, and Mr. Gifford was good enough to say I might try my hand at a notice of that new novel 'Daphne's Shadow' for the *Liberal Review*."

"The devil he did! What can have made him so good-natured?"

"I think I know," put in Fitzgerald, dexterously. "His good nature was caused by your good nature in recommending me."

"Oh, that was nothing," said the other, carelessly. "Well, you must be cautious how you set about it. Bring the book to me."

"But I have already sent in the review."

"Already? You haven't been wasting time, then."

"And I have been doing more than that," said Fitzgerald, pulling out a certain envelope. "I have been putting together a few salmon flies for you, if you care to have them. I found I could get the materials better in London."

"Ah, thanks, much obliged," said Hilton Clarke, taking out one or two of the flies with his beautiful white fingers. "But about this review. I am afraid the gray-eyed Athene wasn't looking after you when you sent it in in such a hurry. I wish you had come to me first. Young reviewers don't seem to understand that they ought to consider for whom

they are writing when they write. It isn't the public; the public judge for themselves nowadays; dinner-tables and clubs do all that. Nor the author; the author is pig-headed; besides if you don't tell him he is better than Byron or Shakespere he will think you are devoured with jealousy and spite. No," continued Hilton Clarke, as he carefully rolled up another cigarette. "You are writing for your editor. He is the audience you ought to consider. He is the person you must impress with a conviction of your sagacity. Now, to do that, you see, you want experience, you want to know your man. I wish you had come to me. I suppose it never occurred to you to put John Brown into the review you wrote for Gifford?"

"John Brown?" said Fitzgerald, looking bewildered. "What John Brown?"

"John Brown of Harper's Ferry. No, you never thought of that. But if you had only come to me, I could have told you that you had only to put John Brown into the review, anywhere, anyhow, and you'd have fetched old Gifford to a dead certainty. He can't withstand John Brown. All you've got to do," he continued, contemplating one of the salmon flies and stroking out the soft feathers, "is to take John Brown's body, without any wings, or hackle, or tinsel, as one might say, and you drop that fly quietly over Gifford's nose, and he'll rise to it like a grilse just fresh run from the sea."

Fitzgerald could not understand why this friend of his lost no opportunity of throwing taunts—however they might be veiled in a sort of scornful fastidiousness—at Mr. Gifford; but for the constraint with which he listened to such speeches there were also other reasons. Among the various articles of young Fitzgerald's creed (he was barely three and twenty) there were none he clung to more implicitly than these two. First, that the great majority of womankind were honest and honourable, self-denying, believable, and worthy of all the beautiful things that had been said about them by the poets; and, secondly, that literature was one of the noblest callings on the face of the earth, and that he who did good work therein, whether it was in definitely adding to the world's possessions in that

way, or whether it was merely in teaching men, from week to week, or from day to day, what they ought to value, was a public benefactor who ought to be regarded with respect and affection and gratitude. Now on both these points Mr. Hilton Clarke discoursed with a complacently open scepticism; and at such times Fitzgerald wished he could close his ears against this talk; not that it in the slightest degree affected his beliefs, but that it affected what he wished to regard as the character of his friend. Fitzgerald was naturally a hero-worshipper, and he was capable of a warm gratitude. He wished to think the best of his friend. And when Hilton Clarke talked in this fashion, which he seemed to enjoy in proportion as Fitzgerald's face fell, the latter would try to close his ears as much as he could. Then again when he left he would endeavour to forget all that he had heard. He would remember only Hilton Clarke's best points—the charm of his conversation when he happened to light on some literary point that interested him; his great kindness shown to a mere stranger met by chance in the south of Ireland; and his personal courtesy (the way in which he had come to the relief of his incorrectly attired guest was still fresh in Fitzgerald's mind). Besides, perhaps his experience of women had been unfortunate; and perhaps his disparagement of contemporary literature, especially of critical literature, was due to a sort of modesty, seeing that he himself held an enviable position in it.

"Well now, Fitzgerald, let's get on to this magazine business. Won't you smoke?"

"No, thank you, I never smoke till night; it takes up too much time."

"Ah, the eager impetuosity of youth. When you get a dozen years older, you'll be glad of something to help you to pass the hours. Well, my friend the capitalist has got some impetuosity too. In one day he has managed to secure a business manager for us, and also a publishing-office in the Strand. No doubt we should start as soon as possible; for in a short time every one will be in London for the season, and then it is that people begin to talk about their plans for the autumn. Scobell suggests the week after

next; but that is clearly impossible. We must have material to begin with; people won't pay a shilling for a mere programme of our intentions. My private impression is that the capitalist imagines he will find himself a person of importance in society through his connection with this magazine; but it will be part of your business, Mr. Sub-Editor, to remember that it is I who am editor of the magazine, and not Dick Scobell."

"Oh, of course. I know what rows with proprietors are," said Fitzgerald.

"Proprietors are the most unreasonable of mortals. They don't understand their proper sphere of duty,—which is to pay and look pleasant. If the venture succeeds, they get good interest for their money. If it doesn't, they don't mend matters by coming in at intervals, like a Greek chorus: 'Oh! oh! oh! Woe! woe!, woe!' Now, as regards your own position, Fitzgerald," he said, as he poured out a small glass of Chartreuse—showing as he did so a singular-looking ring on his finger, consisting of a little Indian god, in gold, fastened on a broad silver hoop. "Have you considered the question of remuneration?"

"As regards myself?"

"Yes."

"Not in the least," said Fitzgerald, with something of a blush. "I don't expect very much at the outset. I think I am very lucky to get a start so early after coming to London. There is an artist neighbour of mine who thinks I have been very lucky indeed, and he considers everything a matter of luck, even getting elected a member of the Academy."

"He must have been looking at this year's exhibition," said Hilton Clarke, drily. "Well, now, this capitalist friend gives me a lump sum, I may explain to you, and he holds me responsible for all the literary matter, and for having the thing properly put together. What you will have to do won't interfere, I hope and think, with any more serious literary work. Very well, what do you think of four pounds a week? Speak frankly, you know, for I may squeeze the good Scobell a little further yet."

"Four pounds a week?" said Fitzgerald, with his face

brightening up with surprise. "Then my artist friend was right. I had five-and-twenty shillings a week from the *Cork Chronicle.*"

"It is enough, then?"

"Yes, indeed. It is far more than I expected."

"You should never say that. It is not wise. However, as I am dealing with another man's money, I am not going to reduce the offer; and I think myself it is a fair one. And so you had five-and-twenty shillings a week on the *Cork Chronicle?*" said Hilton Clarke, regarding the younger man. "Twenty-five shillings a week; youth, and health, and high ambition; and somebody to write love verses about: I suppose you were not unhappy? Oh yes, I could detect that subtle inspiration here and there, in whatever guise the young lady turned up. But I have always had a suspicion that when youthful poets gave their sweethearts long and sounding names, the ladies themselves were rather short of stature. Is not that so? It is like calling a musical little verse in Horace a choriambic dimeter acatalectic. The Lady Irmingarde, for example. That is a fine name; but I would wager now that the Lady Irmingarde is not over five feet two."

"I don't see what that has to do with this new magazine," said Master Willie, striving to be very calm, but with all the quick blood of the Fitzgeralds blazing in his face.

"Don't be angry, man," said the other good-naturedly. "I hope it will have a great deal to do with the new magazine. You see, in every well-conducted household you will find two or three people either in love with somebody or other, or else willing to think of the days when they were; and you can't appeal to that sentiment unless you, the writer, have yourself a fresh fount of inspiration to draw from. You don't suppose that the old writers, when they were describing Helen, formed her out of their own head? Of course not. Of course they turned to the pretty Chloè or the laughing Lalage of their acquaintance, to see what soft cheeks and pretty eyes could be likened to. Do you remember Symmons's translation of that passage in the *Agamemnon*—well, it is rather a paraphrase than a translation; but listen to this as a piece of English:—

'When first she came to Ilion's towers
Oh, what a glorious sight, I ween, was there!
The tranquil beauty of the gorgeous queen
Hung soft as breathless summer on her cheeks,
Where, on the damask sweet, the glowing zephyr slept;
And like an idol beaming from its shrine,
So o'er the floating gold around her thrown
Her peerless face did shine;
And though sweet softness hung upon their lids,
Yet her young eyes still wounded where they looked.'

Is not that fine?

'Yet her young eyes still wounded where they looked.'"

And indeed Fitzgerald considered it was so fine—and so nearly suggestive of a pair of soft black innocent young eyes that he knew of far away, that he straightway forgot all his wrath, and proposed to his companion that, if he had time, they should walk down to the Strand, and have a look at the offices.

"I can't very well," said Hilton Clarke, yawning and stretching out his long legs, and stroking his yellow beard. "I have got to dress first. Then I am going on to Jermyn Street to the Turkish Baths. Then I've got one or two calls to make in the afternoon. But you might go down if you like, and introduce yourself to the manager. His name is Silas Earp. And don't forget we must have a touch of sentiment in the magazine; it is wonderful the interest that grown people take in young people's love affairs. Look at the eagerness with which they read Breach of Promise cases—the more absurd the better, don't you see; for they are delighted to find other people making just such fools of themselves as they did at the same age."

Well, Fitzgerald got away; and was rather glad; for somehow he liked Hilton Clarke better, and was more grateful to him, when he was not listening to him. And now indeed the day was joyful to him—a fresh, clear, May day, with the pavements of Piccadilly looking quite white; and all he could think of was that Kitty would not know soon enough of the good fortune that had befallen him. After all, why should he have been angry about the mention

of the Lady Irmingarde?—it was only good-humoured banter. For indeed, as Andy the Hopper had remarked, "'twas Masther Willie had the duck's back;" and annoyances ran clean off his shoulders, so long as you gave him plenty of fresh air and sunlight, and a moderate share of pavement for his eager and rapid walking.

He went down to the Strand and saw the offices, which were in a sad state of confusion and dust. Likewise he had a long conversation with Mr. Earp, and a briefer one with the great capitalist himself, who seemed surprised that Hilton Clarke had not shown up, though Fitzgerald ventured to point out that an editor could not be of much use about the place until they had provided him with at least a desk and a penny bottle of ink. Then with one hurried and passing glance at the office of the *Liberal Review*—where, perhaps, that first contribution of his was at this very moment under consideration—he set off home as fast as his legs could carry him, anxious to fill up the rest of the day with some work, and also in the secret hope of finding a letter from Kitty, missed by his early outgoing of that morning, awaiting him. Moreover, he was very hungry, after these many hours; and so, on reaching his spacious if somewhat bare and low-roofed study, he besought his landlady to cook him a chop with all convenient speed. And indeed that was a right royal banquet that he enjoyed there, all by himself, in the silent, big room, made cheerful by the sunlight streaming in at the open window; for if it consisted only of a chop, some bread, and a glass of ale, was there not a letter of Kitty's, over a dozen pages long, to serve as a musical and laughing accompaniment? The sun shone warm on the faded rugs on the floor; there was the faintest stirring of the wind among the young plane-trees in the courtyard outside; in the silence it almost seemed as if he could hear Kitty talking to him. And then again he had to imagine another picture—that lofty little terrace that looked down on Cork and over to Shandon steeple; and a small room there; and Kitty bending over these precious leaves, and sometimes raising her head, to look at the rain or to think of him far away.

"Audley Place, Tuesday.

"My Beloved and Bonny Coulin[1]—

"What I have done to deserve it I don't know, but since ever I came back to this blessed town there has been nothing but rain, rain, and rain, and the Beautiful City, that you tried to make me believe was like Venice, is nothing but a mass of smoke away down in a hole, and St. Mary's steeple over there seems to shiver with cold when it strikes the half-hours, and the only human beings within sight are a lot of rooks in the meadows across the road, and you can tell by the noise they make they are in a frightful temper because of the wet. I do wonder now more than ever where, in such a climate, a certain person got all the sunniness that's in his face, and in his eyes, and more particularly his hair. Did he take all there was to get and leave none? At all events, Master Coulin, it's a very good thing for you, and it's a very bad thing for me, that you and I did not live in the time when the cold-hearted Saxon made the young Irishmen crop their locks, for then I wouldn't have looked at you, and I'd have minded my own proper business. Dear me, the audacity of some people and the folly of others! Just when a good contralto is worth a mint of money in Italian opera, jealousy steps in and says, No, you sha'n't; you sha'n't even be allowed to sing in England; no more Crystal Palace for you; nothing but concerts in such centres of civilisation as Cork and Limerick and Belfast; and just to make sure of hiding away such a diamond—no, I suppose it should be an emerald in Ireland—I'll set Don Fierna and his wicked elves to bind you in invisible chains, and something awful will happen to you if you even whisper La Scala in your dreams. Well, whether it was her tremendous good-nature, or whether it was the sunlight that had got into the brown of Mr. Jealousy's hair, or whether she got such a fright with the ghosts that she promised anything without the slightest notion of keeping her word, I don't know, but the thing was done; and then all of a sudden—in return for her extraordinary good-nature and self-sacrifice, she finds

[1] *Coulin* in Irish means "The youth with the flowing hair." Miss Romayne was doubtless familiar with Moore's songs.

herself a forlorn and forsaken damsel; left to pace up and down the sand of Inisheen, which, as Andy the Hopper remarks, is so firm and clean that, 'sure, Miss, ye might walk on it wid a satin shoe.'

"Oh, Willie, I'm sick tired of the rain, and I don't know what I'm writing to you. I was wet through last night coming home. What induced me to take these rooms I don't know. I shall never again take lodgings where one cannot drive home on a wet night. But Miss Patience says she likes large views; I suppose they conform with her great mind. I have been so good, Willie. I have been really so very good that I don't know what to do with myself; and I expect to find wings sprouting some morning when I get up. I haven't gone round by the barracks once; and the two or three times I have gone round I have kept my eyes fixed on the gravel *the whole way*, just in case a young ossifer might come riding out (I can see the frown on your face quite clearly, and perhaps it isn't safe to put jokes in a letter, when one isn't by to be scolded for impertinence, flippancy, unlady-like manners, and all the pleasant rest of it). So we'll get back to business, please, and the truth is, you know, Master Willie, although it has been reserved for an English singer to reveal to the Irish people the pathos of 'The Bells of Shandon,' all the same the English singer can't earn a living by singing that one song,—unless indeed she were to sing it through the streets, like Nellie in the *Green Bushes*. No, nor even when she makes a skilful selection illustrating the wonderful virtues of the Irish people, and when she shifts her engagements as much as possible from north to south, and east to west; yes, and even when she makes excuses for pretty long holidays—at Inisheen or elsewhere; even the Irish people, though liking to be told of their virtues, may get a little tired of her, and wish to see a little less of her. In that case managers might begin to hint about reduction of terms; whereas, even at present, it's just about all she can do to keep things straight—waiting for the glorious time when Prince Golden-hair is coming to claim her and carry her off. Very well, now, this is the point; at the —— Theatre in Dublin they're going to put in a

panorama between the pieces, and they've made me an offer; (now you needn't jump out of your chair like that; it isn't to go on the stage) I say they have made me a very fair and liberal offer if I will go and sing for them—only one song each evening, which is light work, and I shall have no expense of dresses or gloves, for I sing in the 'wings' unseen. Don't you see the panorama is really a series of pictures of Irish scenery, and when they come to the finest of them—of course it's Killarney in moonlight, that's because they don't know the glen near the Blackwater where Don Fierna lives and where mischief is done to the hearts of poor distressed damsels,—then the orchestra begins to play very softly and sweetly, and then you hear the voice of an angel (that's me) singing away somewhere—at Innisfallen or Killeenalougha. I don't think much of the song they have sent me; but I daresay it will sound very nice in that mysterious way, and the moonlight and the view of the lake will put a charm into my poor singing. Now, Willie, I know you don't want me to go to Dublin; but this isn't like going to Dublin in an ordinary kind of way, for my name won't appear in the bills at all, and nobody will know who is singing. It will really be a long holiday for me, and I shall come back to my concert series after a sufficiently long absence, and I promise you that as I shall have no audience visible, I will sing every evening just as if I were singing to you; and think of you all the time, and the management will not have reason to be sorry for *that*. Now what do you say? My father's half-pay just about keeps him, you know; but I have always tried to send him some little present about midsummer to induce him to go down to Ramsgate or Margate for a week. Then these long holidays, even with all the good old Patience's economy, have very nearly emptied my purse, and supposing that Prince Golden-hair were suddenly to appear and say, 'Look sharp, Miss Kitty, I've found the bag of diamonds I went for. Come along!' wouldn't it be very awkward if I had to say, 'Oh, but, dear sir, I haven't got a farthing to buy my white satin dress with'? So be a good boy and don't make any objections, and every night I'll think of you as I'm singing the song—

oh dear me, as if I had anything else to do now but think of you; with a bit of a cry now and again.

"What *is* the use of my writing to you? I know what you are doing at this moment. You are not working at all; you are not thinking of me at all; you are walking in Hyde Park with Mr. Supercilious and admiring the fine ladies, and I shouldn't wonder if he had got you to convict-crop your hair, like his own, and wear gloves to get your hands white. Why should I waste my time on you when you're not thinking about me? Perhaps you won't open this letter at all; perhaps you will leave it lying unopened on the table, I shouldn't wonder a bit.

"I got Miss Patience to drive out on a car to *the glen*. But it was common daylight, and Don Fierna and his elves had gone away indoors; and there was nothing but grumbling from the dear old Patience at her having to scramble down the bank and scratch her hand with briers. She couldn't imagine why I wanted to pull her to pieces like that, nor could I get Andy the Hopper that same afternoon to say a word about fairies or Don Fierna. Indeed all the neighbourhood became quite commonplace. Inisheen is a mean-looking miserable hole; I never saw such dirty streets; and the wretched tubs of vessels are lying not on sand at all, but on mud. I hated it—except one or two nights when the moon was up, and I looked out on the cliffs beyond the bar, and I said to myself, 'Well now, if my bonny boy were coming home from these cliffs carrying with him the wild pigeons he had been after all the day, perhaps I'd like the place a little better,' and then, you know, how could I help thinking of the night you rowed me home in the boat, and all Inisheen asleep, and you had wrapped me up so tight in the shawl? I waved my handkerchief to you from the window, but I daren't lift the window, so you couldn't see. I watched you go away back to the town—the boat the wee-est black speck on the silver of the water. Dear me! that I should say anything against Inisheen, that is the dearest spot in the world to me, and hallowed by associations that memory will never give up. My dear, dear Inisheen! My beautiful Inisheen! And will it be moonlight on that same

night seven years hence? Perhaps I shall not be so frightened then.

"But what I dread most of all, Willie, is next Sunday morning. I know it will be a beautiful morning just to spite me. And I know how I shall wait about the window with all my things on long before the time, and looking over to the clock of St. Anne's and wishing it would push ahead and make the single Shandon bell strike the half-hour. (Why did you quarrel with Miss Patience, Willie? it was so nice to listen for your ring at the door.) And then half-past ten strikes and out I go; and I am certain it will be the loveliest morning, and the hawthorn just coming out, and all the fresh air sweet-scented. And no one at the corner—the place quite empty—no trace of the gamekeeperish young Apollo, with the shy eyes and the sun-brown locks, who used to say 'The top of the morning to ye, Miss Kitty!' and be so modest and grateful for her condescension. Then away she goes *all alone* past the barracks—but really, really and truly, honour bright, keeping her eyes on the ground *the whole way* until she has passed the walls—and then do you know of a lane about there, Master Willie? Do you know of a lane about there that you can go along and twist and turn about, until you get out among hedgerows, where grown-up children can pull wild flowers and say pretty things to each other? Did you ever go along such a lane?

"But you are not listening. You are out walking with Mr. Superciliousness, and if there's anybody in the wide world who hates you *with her whole heart*, it's your despised but forgiving KITTY."

He looked at the beginning of the letter again.

"I'm glad it rained on Tuesday," he said to himself; and he thought that his conscience would perhaps absolve him if he put off his work for a little while, to send Kitty just as long a letter as she had sent him—cheating the great distance between them, as it were, and imagining himself talking to her in the little room looking over the valley to Shandon tower.

CHAPTER VI.

A FIRST CHECK.

TIME passed and Fitzgerald grew very anxious about not hearing anything, good, bad, or indifferent, concerning the review he had sent to Mr. Gifford. He ventured to mention the matter to Hilton Clarke.

"Get it back," he said, laughing, "and put John Brown into it."

However, if each morning brought its little pang of disappointment, there was no time for balancing hope and fear during the rest of the day; for now the new magazine was being pushed forward, and everybody had his hands full. Everybody, that is to say, except the editor-in-chief, who, when Fitzgerald called on him and urged him to come down to the Strand to decide some matter or other, seemed much more inclined for a lounge along Piccadilly, if the morning was fine, accompanied by this attentive Telemachus, who willingly listened to his discursive monologue. By this time Fitzgerald had got to know something more about Hilton Clarke, and had observed among other things that he seemed quite incapable of denying himself any gratification that lay within his reach. No matter what it was—having his initials in silver on his ivory-backed hair-brushes, or the purchase of an illuminated missal displayed in a shop window; the whim of the moment had to be gratified, and he was careful to point out to Fitzgerald that he, Hilton Clarke, had already done a good deal for Mr. Scobell in presenting him with the idea of this new magazine, and also to assign as a reason for his carelessness

or his idleness the necessity of the business people having all their arrangements completed first.

One morning Fitzgerald went up to the Albany and found his chief with the accustomed cigarette in his hand reading the *Contes Rémois*—or, more probably, and profitably, looking over the delightful little woodcuts. He put the book aside as Fitzgerald entered.

"Mr. Scobell has made a suggestion that I think very good," said the latter, after the usual greetings. "He thinks you should have for your opening article a paper written by a lawyer, some well-known Q.C., for example, on the terms of leases and agreements, and the points that should be carefully looked after. '*Points on which a solicitor should be consulted*,' he suggests. You know, lots of people enter into agreements about a shooting or a house, that look all right and safe, but that may land them anywhere. Now just at the outset wouldn't that be rather appropriate?"

Hilton Clarke looked at him.

"The suggestion is Scobell's?"

"Yes."

"Well, you see, I don't think it is a bad one; but at the outset it is most important for me, and for you, and for Dick Scobell, to know precisely where we are. Now I am the editor of this new magazine, and Mr. Scobell is not."

"Yes," said Fitzgerald, wondering; "but surely you may take suggestions from anybody if they happen to be worth anything?"

"From anybody—except my proprietor, you understand. No, we will get our own idea for an opening article, Fitzgerald. Let's talk about something you are more familiar with. And I have some news for you. One of the most charming women in London, one of the wittiest and one of the best looking too, has expressed an interest in you."

"Oh, indeed," said Fitzgerald, professing to be very grateful, as in duty bound.

"I showed her your 'Woodland Walk,' and she commissioned me to ask you whether the verses were your own——"

"Which verses?" said Fitzgerald, for indeed there were several little bits of rhyme cunningly interwoven with that gossip about birds and waterfalls.

"Why, those with the refrain, 'The little ringlets round her ears.' Ah, I can see they were your own. I thought so myself. And I was to ask whether the little ringlets were dark or golden—golden, she guessed."

Fitzgerald flushed and said with an indifferent air—

"I suppose the lines can apply to any colour—pink as well as another."

"You won't tell us, then? Well, it was a pretty notion to bring the refrain in at the end of each verse. The music of it catches you. If I were writing an opera I should have one particular air running all through it; cropping up here and there, you know, so that people should get quite familiar with it, and be able to whistle it as they go home. You have no idea how consoling it is to some people to whistle an air from a new opera as they are coming out. That is a pretty refrain you have in your verses.

'You hear the secret words she hears,
You little ringlets round her ears!'

Yes, I like it. The repetition is effective."

"I have been to the lithographer's," said Fitzgerald, shortly. "The cover looks very well; but I have told him to try red on a white ground. That would be clearly seen on the bookstalls."

"Ah, yes, no doubt. Earp will see to that, I suppose. Now, Fitzgerald, I suppose you know very little about women as yet?

"I suppose not," said the other.

"I know one thing that will surprise you when you find it out, as I daresay you will." He stretched out his legs, and regarded the tips of his fingers—a favourite attitude of his when he had got something he liked to talk about. But sometimes he regarded his companion. "I am quite convinced myself that there are a large number of women who know nothing about, who are incapable of knowing anything about, the romantic sentiment of love. They

have never experienced it; they will never experience it; and when they read about it in books they don't believe in it; they think it is only the ridiculous exaggerations of a poet or a playwright. They no more believe what they read about the passion of love than a man with an unmusical ear believes what people say about Mozart, or than a man whose eye is uneducated believes what is written about Titian. But, mind you, these are the women it is safest to make a marriage contract with. They will honourably fulfil their part of it; make good wives and mothers; and be affectionate enough in a trustworthy, patient, unimaginative sort of way, without causing any anxiety or bother. Well, now, I believe there are other women who are just as much the other way—who have an absolute hunger and thirst for the sentiment of love, for its dram-drinking, as you might say—women of an unappeasable heart. If it is your bad luck to come across one of these at the moment when her affections are by some extraordinary chance disengaged—she will almost certainly make you fall in love with her; and then, mind you, so long as you are near her, and keep her amused and occupied with fallings out and reconciliations and so forth, I daresay she will remain quite faithful to you. Oh yes, I have no doubt of that. But if you go away, that is dangerous. Her eyes will begin to roam about, and her heart to put out trembling little feelers. Of course if you were to marry her off hand that might settle it; and certainly if she had children she would probably keep all right, for she would transfer her excess of affection to them. But to be left alone—to have this warm generous little heart of hers wanting to be kind to somebody—and her young eyes still wounding where they look—poor thing, how can she help going and playing the mischief?"

"Perhaps your experience of women has been unfortunate," said Fitzgerald, as respectfully as possible. It was quite clear to him that Hilton Clarke had, perhaps in conjunction with the clever lady he had referred to, been speculating about the person who had inspired the verses in the "Woodland Walk"—that is to say, Kitty; and Fitzgerald resented this harmless curiosity as a piece of

intolerable impertinence. They wanted to know whether her hair was dark or golden; they had been wondering whether she was a placid, faithful, unsentimental good sort of stupid creature, or a dangerous flirt—either suggestion seeming to him monstrous; and generally, as it appeared to him, they had been betraying a quite gratuitous interest in his private affairs. But Hilton Clarke continued as if he were quite unaware of the resentment that these generalisations of his had provoked.

"No," he said quietly, "I think not. And I would call it observation rather than experience. I suppose now you have never noticed that a woman's eyes are always wandering? You have never sate at a *table-d'hôte*, and watched, for the fun of the thing, have you?"

"No, I should probably be attending to my dinner."

"Ah, that is it. That is just it. If you look at the married couples, the husbands are attending to their dinners. It is the women whose eyes are constantly on the alert. You may look at the man as long as you like, and he won't know anything about it; but look at the woman only for a second, and her eyes will meet yours—of course instantly to turn away again. Indeed, I believe that women can tell when they are being regarded, even when their own eyes are bent upon the table. It is a kind of instinct."

"You seem to do a good deal of staring when you go abroad," remarked Fitzgerald.

"No; I think not. But I have tried the experiment a few times. Oh, by the way, my charming friend says I may take you to one of her smoking parties."

"Smoking-parties? Are there ladies there?"

"Yes, of course."

"And they smoke?"

"If they are inclined to. Some do; some don't. It is Liberty Hall."

"And does the charming lady smoke?" said Fitzgerald, timidly. He wanted to know something about her, as she had wanted to know something about Kitty.

"Well, occasionally. But she is quite as willing to sit in a corner with you, and talk to you; and very soon you

will imagine you are listening to one of the laughing ladies out of Boccaccio. But it is dangerous."

"What is?"

"Her trying to keep those parties away from Sir John's ears. She'd much better own up. Some time or other he'll come back from Ireland unexpectedly, and there will be a row."

"Sir John is her husband, I suppose?"

"Yes. I've asked her to write an article on grass-widows for our magazine, and I'll have to see it doesn't set Clapham in a blaze—Islington, rather. But we sha'n't have many subscribers in Islington."

"I think I must be off now," said Fitzgerald, rising. "You think, then, Mr. Scobell had better not speak about that article to a lawyer."

"I think, with Mr. Scobell's permission, I will edit the magazine myself. And so I am not to take any message about the little ringlets round her ears?"

"Oh, certainly. I told you," said Fitzgerald, "that pink was a good colour. Let them be pink, if you like."

"Wait a bit," said the other laughing. "You won't be so uncommunicative when a certain bright-eyed lady gets you into a corner and talks to you; and asks to be allowed to light her cigarette at yours; that is coming very near, isn't it? Good-bye. Oh, about that review; if you are anxious, why don't you call and ask Gifford about it?"

"I would," said Fitzgerald, hesitatingly, "if I thought I shouldn't be driving him."

"Oh, bother him!" said Hilton Clarke, cheerfully. "If he does not want it, we can use it in the magazine."

That parting touch took away much of Fitzgerald's resentment. The man was evidently good-natured. And even supposing he had been pushing his questions or his surmises about Kitty a little too close, might it not have been through a really friendly interest? Then, again, it was something that so great and acknowledged an authority as Hilton Clarke had looked favourably on the little verses. Master Willie had placed no great store by them himself. He had, indeed, hidden them away in a rambling sort of gossip, imagining that no one but Kitty and himself would

know that he himself had written them. And as they had pleased the great critic, he would write to Kitty and tell her. Had she not a sort of joint ownership in them?

Fitzgerald had now to return to the Strand; and as he was walking along that thoroughfare it suddenly occurred to him that he would take Hilton Clarke's advice and call at the *Liberal Review* office, and so put an end to his anxiety. The advice was well meant; but it was injudicious; and still more injudicious was Fitzgerald's choice of an opportunity. To go and worry an editor about a neglected manuscript is a mistake at any time; but to do so before luncheon is pure madness. When the morning scramble of correspondence is well over; when the frugal chop and pint of claret have moderated the *sæva indignatio* produced by the contrariety of things; and when, perhaps, the mild Manilla and the evening papers may be still further inducing the editorial mind to repose, then indeed there may be hope for the anxious inquirer; but not before. Fitzgerald had to wait some twenty minutes in the office; during which time there was a constant passing up and down stairs on the part of strangers, whom he regarded with considerable awe. Then a boy brought him a message that Mr. Gifford could see him, and he followed the inky-fingered Mercury. In a minute or two he was standing very much like a culprit in the front of a long writing-table; and Mr. Gifford, who was on the other side, and who looked impatient and troubled and hurried, was plunging to and fro in a sea of manuscripts.

"Ah, here it is," he said at last. "Sit down. Glad you have called. I meant to write. Well, you see——" He looked over a page or two, and an expression of dissatisfaction was very plainly visible on his face. "Why, you seem to have found nothing in the book, one way or the other!"

If Fitzgerald had had his wits about him, he would perhaps have remarked that that was precisely what he had found in the book; but he was far too disturbed and aghast at the querulous fashion in which the Editor spoke of the article upon which he had built so many hopes.

"No, I don't think this will do," continued Mr. Gifford.

looking over the pages. "I am sorry to have given you the trouble; but really you have made nothing out of the book. Surely there must be something in it, good or bad; you have found it nothing but what is lukewarm, like the church of the Lacedemonians. There is no flavour in what you have written. Look there!"

Fitzgerald was too agitated to think of putting the Laodiceans in their proper historical place; he mechanically took from Mr. Gifford a printed slip which the latter pulled off a file. It turned out to be a proof of a bookseller's advertisement; and at the head of the column appeared the contents of the forthcoming number of a great Quarterly.

"Do you see?" continued Mr. Gifford. "That article about 'A New Novelist' has been called forth by this very book that you see nothing in; and I am told they regard its publication as marking a new departure in modern English literature."

"Then I say that that is most shameful," said Fitzgerald, driven to desperation. "There must have been bribery or personal influence. The book is as weak and feeble as it can be; it is a scandal to English journalism that bribery of some kind or another should have got such an article written."

"How can you tell?" said the other peevishly. "In your opinion the book is bad. Other people may not think so. And even you don't seem to think the book bad enough to call forth any definite disparagement."

"It is merely frivolous."

"And you are even complimentary here and there.—Well, then, perhaps you will excuse me if I point out some things that may be of service to you. You know you ought to be accurate in your quotations.

> '*De par le Roi, défense à Dieu,*
> *D'opérer miracle en ce lieu.*'

D'opérer instead of *de faire miracle*, and that in so familiar a quotation——"

"But *d'opérer* is right," said Fitzgerald, hastily interrupting.

Gifford stopped and regarded him.

"Oh, is it? What is your authority? I should have thought the old police distich was well enough known."

Fitzgerald was so anxious to justify himself, that his memory failed him altogether at this critical point. Nothing but confusion met him when he tried to recall where he had met with that luckless couplet. And so Mr. Gifford, turning from him to the manuscript, proceeded:

"Then you introduce extraneous matter for no sufficient reason. You say here, 'One might arrive at a sort of negative definition of poetry by saying that it was precisely that quality which is conspicuously absent from every page of Pope, and which is conspicuously present in almost every line of Coleridge.' Now what is the use of advancing an opinion like that?"

"One of the characters in the book——"

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Gifford, with an impatience that was scarcely civil; though it was most likely he had been worried about something or other that morning, "but a reviewer cannot be expected to set all the opinions of all the characters in a book right. And when you proceed to remove Pope from the category of English poets, you want more than a single sentence if you would justify yourself. It is not enough for you to say that such and such a thing is: you must prove it to be so. You can't go and settle half a hundred disputed literary points in the course of a single book notice——"

"I am sorry it won't do," said Fitzgerald, lifting his hat. "I may as well take the manuscript with me, if you don't mind."

"I am sorry you have had the trouble; but one must learn reviewing as other things; and perhaps I made a mistake in thinking you had had enough practice. There are one or two other points I might show you."

"Oh no, thank you; no, thank you," said Fitzgerald, with great courtesy, "I wouldn't trouble you. I must not take up so much of your time. Good-morning. I am very much obliged to you."

And so he got himself out of the office with all his mind aflame. It was not so much disappointment as indignation that consumed him; indignation that such a book should

be made so great a matter of, simply because it was written by a member of the government, by a man known in political life. What was the objection, then, to this review but that he had not made it violent enough either with praise or blame? If he had made of it a balloon, now, and tied the worthless volumes to it and sent them up into the blue; or if he had made a nether millstone of it and hung it round Spencer Tollemache's neck, and plunged him in mid-ocean, no doubt the black-browed Editor would have been charmed. But because he had merely told the truth, the review was lukewarm like the Lacedemonians. The Lacedemonians! And *de faire miracle!*—he knew it was *d'opérer miracle!* As for Pope, he declared to himself that the whole "Essay on Man," boiled down and strained through a cotton rag, would not produce as much poetry as you could find in a single phrase of Herrick's or Suckling's. And then he devoted the whole art and function of criticism to the infernal gods; and then—in the middle of the Strand, among the hurrying strangers—he laughed lightly.

For it suddenly occurred to him that to betray such temper, or to feel so keenly his disappointment, was not bearing out the character that Andy the Hopper had given of him to Kitty. Was he going to allow this first bit of misfortune to cast him down? He began to regard the matter from a common-sense point of view. After all, his being debarred from further hope of contributing to the *Liberal Review* (and he had to admit that Mr. Gifford's manner seemed conclusive on that point) did not necessarily doom him to starvation. And why should he be angry with the great Quarterly, even if it had been unduly influenced?—the public would speedily put the matter right by leaving the book, if it was worthless, unread. When he came to think of it, moreover, there might be some justification for Mr. Gifford's harsh censure, regarding the article from the editorial point of view. Doubtless he ought to have left Pope alone. He should not have altered a familiar quotation without being ready with his authority. In fact, by the time that he had reached Charing Cross, he had convinced himself that the world was not so much amiss; and this gradual revival from his fit of disappointment did

not at all stop there; but quite suddenly—and in a manner that seemed to fill all the dusky sunlight of the Strand with a sort of rose-colour—it sprang to a wild resolve. What if he were to go away back to Ireland, and spend a day among the hawthorn lanes with Kitty?

He could not resist. The rebound from that extreme depression carried him away with it; and only the necessity of having to buy a Bradshaw and get some information out of that distressing volume succeeded in calming down this bewildering delight and anticipation that had seized hold of him. Yes, by taking the mail train to Bristol that night, which was a Friday, he could reach Cork on the Saturday evening; and then the Sunday morning—and his meeting Kitty—and clasping her warm white little hand! The whole trip would cost little over two pounds: was it not his only chance before the long drudgery of the new magazine began? A hundred times over he pictured to himself Kitty's face when she should suddenly see him there waiting for her, and each time the expression was different. And as for reviews, and quotations, and black-browed editors, and any fifteen dozen of Daphne's Shadows, he let all these things slip entirely away from him, to be lost in the jangle and roar of the mighty town he was leaving. He was not thinking of them at all. He was thinking of Sunday morning and of Kitty's tender look of wonder and welcome.

It was about a quarter past eight in the evening when he reached Cork; and they were just beginning to light the lamps. There was still a lurid sort of twilight in the stormy purple-blue sky, and the pavements were of a pale gray; but one after another the orange points of the lamps declared themselves, and here and there a yellow glow shone out from the shop windows. The omnibus rattled through the town; past the black groups of idlers; now and again a woman darting out with an angry objurgation to snatch in a vagrant child. He had been looking forward to his passing through the familiar streets as a sort of dream. Now it seemed strangely real. That sense of being at home that he had never experienced in the vast wilderness of London had possession of him again; the accent of the

people had a pleasant, almost pathetic touch in it; he seemed to know them so well, to have got back among old friends.

But he was not going to seek to see Miss Romayne that night, wildly as his heart beat when he thought of her being so near him—just over there in the darkness—little thinking of what was in store for her. No; he would wait for the morning; he would have nothing less than the fresh and clear May morning to show him the sudden, glad love-light leap into Kitty's wondering eyes.

CHAPTER VII.

"WHEN ALL THE WORLD WAS YOUNG."

MASTER WILLIE was up and abroad early the next morning —too early, indeed, for anything but a stroll through the wide, empty, silent thoroughfares of Cork. It was a lovely morning; the sunlight shining clear on the tall fronts of the houses, and on the deserted streets; a light breeze from the south bringing with it suggestions of the sea; the silence only broken by the occasional soft tolling of a distant bell. Was it the stillness of this Sunday morning that made the place seem so strange?—for surely he had not been long enough in London to have forgotten these familiar streets. Or was the keen interest and even affection with which he regarded so well-known a thoroughfare as the South Mall, for example, due to far other causes? Suppose that as he walked along he did not see this actual sunlight around him at all; suppose that instead he was imagining these pavements swimming wet on a dark and miserable week-day night; the cars rattling by and splashing mud; and two figures, closely holding together, arm-in-arm, under one umbrella? And suppose now that he sees one of these two look suddenly up to her companion with a quick, earnest gaze—a look of revelation, confession, complete surrender of love—a look that pledged her life away? For even the South Mall, in its canopy of darkness and rain, may enclose the rose-red, shining jewel of a love-secret.

So he walked hither and thither to pass the time away, half dreaming of these recent days that already seemed to be growing distant, until he found himself in the broad and

winding thoroughfare of St. Patrick's Street, where more passers-by were now becoming visible. Was this, then, the part of the Beautiful City that he had tried to persuade Kitty was like Venice? He looked at the place with a new interest (comparing it with the Fulham Road), and perhaps also, as he thought of Kitty, with a trifle of compunction. But at all events it was picturesque enough—these masses of tall, narrow, variously-built houses in all sorts of architecture; their slate fronts, their red-brick fronts, their plaster fronts, their stone fronts, their bow windows, flat windows, and French windows, all shining in the sun; and their uneven sky-line sharp against the blue; and if he did make that bold comparison to Kitty, no doubt he pointed out to her that they were standing on an island; that there was actually water running below the street; the street itself leading down there to the canal-like Lee, with its busy quays and boats and bridges. He looked at his watch—it was half-past nine; would Kitty chance to have put on that pretty soft gray silk dress he was so fond of, with its touch of deep crimson here and there? Poor Kitty; she did not know he was down here by St. Patrick's bridge, looking at the boats.

He crossed the river and began to ascend leisurely enough the steep and rugged little thoroughfare leading to Audley Place. Every step had an interest for him; he recognised every feature of it—the red road, the white walls hot in the sun, the soft green of the foliage, here and there the golden tresses of a laburnum hanging over from a garden. And Kitty had to toil up this steep ascent on the dark nights going home—sometimes getting wet, too, for want of a covered car. That was because the Prince had not found his bag of diamonds yet. Never mind: the world had not come to an end merely because Mr. Gifford did not like the review of "Daphne's Shadow;" and Kitty might have even something better than a covered car, all in due time.

At length he reached the little terrace on the top of the hill that is known as Audley Place; and he passed along to the end, so that Kitty should not see him prematurely; and leaned his arms on the red stone wall that enclosed a

meadow, in the long grass of which rooks were loudly cawing. How well he knew the spacious picture that now lay before him; of Cork, and its surroundings, and the outlying country. The bulk of the city, it is true, lay down there in the hollow to the left; a dishevelled heap of purple slate roofs softened over by a pale blue smoke; with masses of dark green foliage farther up the valley, and a glimmer here and there of the Lee. But then from the deep of this ravine the hill opposite him sloped gradually upward, the slate roofs becoming less and less dense, until in mid-air rose erect and tall and square the dark red tower of St. Anne's, which holds the Shandon bells; at the foot of it the little churchyard, with its gray stones, and the green and gold of grass and buttercups together. Then, still getting higher, the houses grow fewer; the sunlight catching here and there on a white gable among the gardens; the town loses itself in the country; there are lush meadows dotted with sheep; there are tall hedges powdered with hawthorn blossom; there is a farmhouse half hidden among the elms. And then, finally, the long, softly undulating sky-line, brilliant in the sunny green of the spring-time, meets the tender aerial blue of the morning sky, and we reach the limits of what is visible from the red stone wall or even from Kitty Romayne's window behind us.

Master Willie's heart was very full; for there was not a wide thoroughfare in that dusky city, no, nor a little bypath in the suburbs, nor a winding road leading through the fair green country beyond, that he and Kitty had not made themselves familiar with in their long perambulations. And Shandon tower over there—how could he forget the pretty speech she made him when he had casually said it was odd of the builders to have made this one side of it next them red and the other three sides gray? "I am going to be like Shandon steeple, Willie; and the rose-red side of my love will always be turned to you; and other people may think me gray if they like." Perhaps it was a trifle incoherent; but Kitty was not a literary person; and at all events he knew what she meant.

The slow hands of Shandon clock were now invisibly drawing towards half-past ten; and so he thought he would

go round the corner and await her there, where their meeting could be observed by no one. He paced up and down by this tall gray cheerless stone wall; and he wished the villain rooks would not make such a cawing. But nevertheless the silence was sufficient to let him hear the swinging of a gate. Then he listened—his heart like to choke him. Then—he could not tell how it happened—the world became just filled with a wild delight; for here was the identical soft gray dress, and the pretty little figure; and Kitty herself, who was passing him without looking up. But what was this? Was she crying? Was she trying to hide her face from any stranger?

"Kitty!—Kitty, what is the matter?"

She turned instantly—the wet eyes startled, her face grown suddenly pale; and then, after one second of wild bewilderment and joy, she threw herself sobbing and crying into his arms.

"Oh, it is you after all, Willie! I thought you were coming to-day; I thought of it all the morning; and then to come out and find no one——"

"But how could you think I was coming, my darling?" he cried.

"Oh, I don't know, I don't know," she said, almost wildly, "something in a letter, I think—see, I put on the dress you liked—I made so sure—but, but—oh, you have come to me after all, Willie"—and with that she kissed him, and kissed both his hands, and kissed the sleeve of his coat half-a-dozen times, holding his arm tight the while —"Oh, don't go away again, Willie! Don't leave me again! I cannot live without you—it is not living at all. You won't go away again, Willie, will you? We will live on nothing rather!"

The light that was shining in her eyes as she regarded him!

"And they haven't altered your looks a bit, Willie—not one bit. My bonny boy! Promise me you'll never, never, never go away again, Willie!"

"Well, you audacious creature!" he said, putting straight the pretty little gray hat with its crimson feather. "Whose fiery ambition was it sent me away?"

"Oh, but I've found out my fault; and haven't I cried enough about it too? I don't want any more ambition; I want you, Willie; and I'd work for you if I were to work my fingers off!"

But at this moment a smart young corporal having emerged from the gate of the barracks, came along the road, whistling "Garryowen" and twirling his small cane. So Kitty had to dry her eyes and look presentable; and she slipped her hand into her lover's arm: and they proceeded on their way—well known to both of them.

"That is a most praiseworthy sentiment, Kitty," he said in answer to her proposal. "I suppose you would sing in the streets; and I could enjoy myself in an ale-house with a long pipe—isn't that how it generally ends? But now that I've begun, I'm going on; and some day or other Kitty won't have to get wet through in going home from a concert at night——"

"Oh, Willie, that is too cruel! Did I ever complain? What a stupid I was to mention it even——"

"Never mind. You see, I've got a very fair start, Kitty—four pounds a week for a half-mechanical kind of work that will leave me many chances of getting ahead in other directions. And what have you to say now, Miss Romayne, about the person you suspected so much? I think you ought to be grateful to him. I don't know any one else who would have so gone out of his way to befriend a stranger——"

"That's like you," said Miss Romayne, promptly. "You're too simple. My dearest, you think everybody's like yourself. Don't I see through your fine friend? Everything you have told me in your letters confirms it. I can see it. The fact is, he never thought about that magazine until he saw you at Inisheen; and then he thought he could make some use of such an unusual combination of knowledge of all kinds of out-of-door sports along with literary genius——"

"Hillo, Kitty; we're on the line of high phrases."

"Oh," she said coolly, "if you don't know what you are I do. It was you who gave him the idea of the magazine —I will wager anything——"

"A kiss?".

"Yes—and pay you now if you like."

By this time they had got to the end of Fairy Lane—which may be a Fairy Lane enough in certain circumstances, though as a matter of fact it has a gaunt stone wall on one side and a row of commonplace little cottages on the other—and were making their way round by the back of the barracks, by rugged little roads and crumbling walls and stunted hedges, to the open country.

"I say," continued Miss Romayne, "that he got the idea of that magazine from you. Gratitude, indeed! Where else could he have found any one fit for such a place? Where else could he have got any one who knows all about hounds, and horses, and salmon, and things like that; and who has the education, and ability, and humour of a delightful writer to make it all—all—all just delightful?"

"But wait a minute, Kitty," said he, "are you so sure about all those nice things? I know I can shoot snipe——"

"And you once brought down a wild duck," said Kitty demurely. "Crippled her entirely—she couldn't fly away a wee bit ever after."

"But I want you to be just to Hilton Clarke—but for the post he has given me do you think I'd be here this morning?—and I want to assure you, Kitty, that everybody doesn't regard my literary masterpieces as you do. I told you about the review I had written. Of course I should have been awfully glad to get an article in the *Liberal Review*—even if it had been only three times a year. I never dreamed of such a thing being possible——"

"Yes; but it is possible? You told me——"

"I called on Mr Gifford on Friday. Oh, he wouldn't have it at all."

But Kitty was not the one to be daunted.

"The more fool he!" she said with decision. Nay, she stamped her little foot, and said: "And if he were here I would tell him so! Why, these old fossils are all running in grooves——"

"But fossils don't run in grooves, Kitty."

"And they can't recognise fresh talent," she continued,

not heeding him in her wrath. "How could they be expected to recognise yours? You haven't been brought up in libraries and inky dens all your life. You have been brought up face-to-face with the real things of the world—with the sea, and the sky, and dark nights, and the winter, and all about Inisheen that you have told me. That's living; that's not talking about living; or earning your bread by writing about what other people have said about living. What would Mr. Gifford have done when the ship came ashore at Kenvane Head? Do you think he could have scrambled down the cliffs to help the fishermen——"

"But his business is to write, Kitty——"

"It is not; it is to write about other people's writing," she said, promptly. "Why, I'd like to have seen him write that description of that very thing—the struggles of the fishermen, and then the captain's wife refusing to be saved because her child was drowned. Would there have been any need to cry if *he* had written it? Would they have got up a subscription if *he* had written it? No, I think not. And I should like to see him try to throw a salmon-line thirty-five yards! And do you think he could have climbed up the face of the Priest's Rock with a gun in his hand?"

"But these things are not necessary to the editing of a paper, Kitty," said he, laughing. "And it's very kind of you to try and find excuses; but I am afraid the truth was that I wrote a bad review, and Mr. Gifford properly said no. Well, I was very down-hearted about it——"

"You!" she exclaimed, with a smile of scepticism. "No, you can't make me believe that. The thing isn't in existence that is likely to turn your hair gray."

"Unless it's you yourself, Kitty?—what do you say to that? But I was; entirely down in my boots; for I'd rather see an article of mine printed in the *Liberal Review* than be made Lord Lieutenant and live at the Castle. And then I walked along a bit; and then I thought that the hawthorn must be out about the woods and hedges here; and that you would be having your Sunday morning walk all alone; and then I said to myself, 'I'm going to see Kitty, whatever happens!'"

"And if it was Mr. Gifford that led you to say that,

Willie, I'll forgive him; though I still think him a stupid person who doesn't know his own interests. Oh, I made so sure you would be at the gate this morning! You told me last week always to look out for the unexpected, or something like that; and what do I care to expect about, or think about, except you? I haven't had on this dress since you left; I thought I would keep it till you came back. Miss Patience said this morning, 'Catherine, why are you taking out that gray dress again?' and I said, 'Well, I can't have all my things saturated with camphor; I must take them out and air them sometimes.' And then when I came out and saw no one—I—I thought it was too bad. I don't know whether I was angry with you, or with myself, or London and the tall yellow man——"

"Now, now, Kitty, none of that! How can you be spiteful on such a morning? See here is a bit of hawthorn; let me pin it on for you. I thought the hawthorn would be out. The hedges over there look as if there was snow on them."

By this time their arm-in-arm loiterings and meanderings had brought them within view of a spacious tract of country that lay fair in the warm and clear sunlight. The landscape, it is true, was somewhat marred by certain tall chimneys that rose in the valley below, with mountains of refuse hard by, and a coal-black railway line twisting through; but there was no need for them to look that way unless they liked. Here on these sunny uplands were still meadows all bestarred with daisies; and hedges white with the fresh-scented May; and over there were softly-foliaged woods all in the tender green of the springtime. Then the fair mansion on that distant hill—looking so white among the trees; had its stately repose any attraction for youthful eyes and thoughts? Was there any dream of resting in some such place, away above the din of the world, after the fight and stress was over? Or rather, were not such ambitions quite unthought of? Was it not enough for them to have this still beautiful morning, the sunlight on the warm meadows, the skies blue above them; to have life, love, and youth; a pressure of the hand, a

glance of kindly eyes, perhaps a swiftly snatched kiss where the hedges were tall? For indeed the place was so still and silent on this fair morning that they were suddenly startled by a peculiar silken whistling noise in the air, and looking up they found that an equally startled rook had just flown over their heads and was already half-way across the meadow behind.

She stooped and picked a germander speedwell from the bank, kissed it, and gave it to him.

"It is just the colour of your eyes, Willie," she said. "They keep reminding me of you when I am out walking; and oh! it is so lonely walking now! I have to go over all the things you ever said to me; it is my only company. I say to myself 'Here we quarrelled;' and again 'Here we made it up;' and 'There's the stile he helped me over, and caught me when I jumped down;' and 'Here's where the anemones used to grow, that he used to put in my hair.' Then on I go again; thinking of all the nice love-names you used to call me; and not a human being to say a civil word to one—nothing but the cows staring at you, and the flowers all occupied with their own business of drinking in the sunlight. And of course every one else you meet is sure to have a companion——"

"Never mind, Kitty," said he. "You'll have plenty of society in Dublin; you will have half the young officers from the barracks wanting to get introduced to you."

"Oh, indeed!" she said. "Indeed! I'd ask them if they had learned their drill yet; and if there wasn't one part of it called 'Right-about-face.' But it is very nice of you not to object to my going to Dublin, Willie. You see, it will be a six weeks' engagement; and for me a six weeks' holiday as well; and no silk dresses, or gloves, or music, or bouquets to buy. And they say the picture of Killarney is quite lovely; and just imagine how effective it will be—the lights in the theatre all down; then the moonlight begins to show on Muckross Abbey, perhaps, or perhaps it's Innisfallen, and all the water begins to be silver, and then the orchestra plays a very slow accompaniment; and then—I am going to begin very softly—you hear 'By Killarney's lakes and fells' sung somewhere in the distance!'

You must imagine it to be a voice in the air; and won't I do my best with it when it is my boy's native country that it is all about! Ah me! there won't be anybody then to sing my praises in the *Cork Chronicle*. It will no longer be reserved for an English singer to reveal to the Irish people the pathos of anything at all. No; the only one she ever cared to sing for will be far away; not thinking of her; but having fine dinners in his splendid rooms in London."

He burst out laughing.

"My splendid room in the Fulham Road, Kitty, is furnished with one table and two chairs, and is otherwise about as bare as a billiard-ball. You don't get much splendour for six shillings a week."

"Ah," she said shyly, "if you had only stayed in Ireland, you might have had lodgings cheaper than that."

"Where?" he asked.

"You might," said she, very prettily, and with her eyes cast down, "you might have 'lived in my heart, and paid no rent.'"

However, not once during this long, delicious ramble along lanes, and by farmhouses, and through woods, did Miss Romayne recur to that first eager heart-cry of hers that he should give up his ambitious projects in London and come back to Ireland. For although she could make love very prettily, in a shy, tender, and bewitching fashion, she was nevertheless a sensible young woman; and she perceived that, whether she liked Mr. Hilton Clarke or not, he was affording her lover a very fair start in London literary life. No, she would not ask him to sacrifice those prospects merely to gratify sentiment; but seeing that he was here—and seeing that merely to touch the sleeve of his coat, to know that he was beside her, was the greatest delight in the world to her—her first thought was how he and she could be most together.

"When do you go back, Willie?"

"To-morrow morning."

"To-morrow morning!" she cried; and her face fell. "Must you?"

"My darling, I must; without a doubt."

"But this is dreadful, Willie. Am I only to see you for three hours—and—and the three hours nearly over——"

Her eyes began to fill; and her lips to tremble.

"What do you mean, Kitty? The whole day is before us——"

"There's dinner at two," she said, with her eyes turned aside from him, "and there's church in the afternoon; and then Miss Patience will expect me to stay in all the evening; and how can I see you? Three hours—and it may be years again——"

"Oh, but that won't do at all, Kitty," said he, cheerfully. "I haven't come all this way to spend a day with you, and have half of it cut off. Not a bit. I am going to call on Miss Patience. I am going to apologise for any and every offence that she can think of—for I'm sure I don't know what I've done. She may draw up a list as long as my arm—or as long as her face, which is longer—and I'll write at the foot of it '*Peccavi peccatum grande, et mihi conscius multorum delictorum, sed gratiâ Patientiæ*—that's through the favour of Miss Patience, Kitty—I've been acquitted.'"

Kitty's face rose again.

"And I think it could be managed, Willie, if you wouldn't mind being a little considerate. I have found out what made most of the mischief. You printed a letter of hers in the *Cork Chronicle*."

"I know I did; I thought she would be pleased."

"But she sent it anonymously."

"I only appended her initials. I recognised the handwriting; and it was a sensible enough letter. I thought she would be pleased."

"But you don't understand, Willie; I must tell you about poor old Patience; though it is absurd. You see she takes a great interest in public affairs; and thinks she is in a good position for being an impartial adviser—not influenced by interested motives, you understand, Willie—and so she writes letters to the newspaper-editors throughout the country, and to the Cabinet ministers, and advises them. She writes and approves of what they've said; or she suggests things they should do; and of course sometimes

they do do that, and then poor old Patience is very delightful to live with, for she'll let you do anything on these days. But then she believes that, if her name was known, all her influence in public affairs would fade away, for the public men would think she was wanting something from them; and so she writes anonymously. Then you must needs go and discover her secret, and put her initials to the letter——"

"There was no harm in the letter, Kitty. It only said that on some particular question, I forget what, we were the only paper in the country that spoke the truth; and every editor likes to print letters like that."

"Then the very next day, I believe, you must needs go and say something about editors being plagued with correspondence; and that she took to herself——"

"I wasn't even thinking of her, Kitty; though anything more diabolical than a woman who spends her life in torturing editors and Cabinet ministers with continual writing to them——"

"Whish—sh—sh. Many a pleasant evening you owe to Miss Patience, young man. So now I'm going in to dinner. No, you mustn't think of it; I will manage it; men always bungle these things; and if you go and get your dinner, and be back about here at three, I will send you a message somehow as to how the weather looks. Oh, where are you staying, Willie?"

"At the Imperial."

"Sure, can't ye say the Impayrial?" remonstrated Miss Romayne. "Very well, then, I will try to send a line to you there."

"Is it much use?" he asked. "I am coming to spend the afternoon with you, Kitty, whatever kind of weather there is."

"Go away, now, you headstrong boy. You may have command over Don Fierna and his pixies in that dreadful glen; but you don't know how to manage a woman's temper. Good-bye, Willie—oh, dear me, how I shall hate the sermon!"

"Good-bye, Kitty. Tell Miss Patience that I know quite well whose advice it was that induced the American Government to give up Mason and Slidell."

He went down to the Imperial, and got something to eat. He was not much distressed about what was going to happen; he would see Kitty that afternoon, and that evening too, despite all the female diplomatists in Ireland or out of it. But in about half an hour any little anxiety was dispelled by the following note, hastily scribbled in pencil, which was brought him by a shock-headed boy.

"My Dearest—I have mollyfied (*sic*) Miss Patience. She has said you might come to supper, at eight. If you are about the front of St. Anne's, when afternoon church comes out, I will go for a little walk with you; but let me leave Miss Patience first; she would not like an explanation in the street. Shall you be in the church? I will look out for you. Do, do be civil to her to-night.

"Your much obliged,

"Catherine the Incomprehensible."

So they had another long and delightful walk in the sunny afternoon; though this time they remained nearer the city, visiting various spots that were hallowed by their own wonderful experiences, and on one occasion standing mute to hear the distant chiming of Shandon Bells. Kitty was most interested in listening to the smallest details about his life in London; but nothing that he could urge could overcome her dislike—or jealousy, or whatever it was—of Hilton Clarke. This was the more unreasonable that she had never spoken a word to him; and had only seen him once or twice in front of the inn at Inisheen. Even about his appearance, which to ordinary eyes seemed handsome and distinguished, nothing would please her. He looked finical. He looked supercilious. He stared impertinently. Wasn't his high priest his tailor? And so forth.

"But you shouldn't say that," Master Willie remonstrated. "He never said anything against you. No, he was quite complimentary. He called you an epichoriambic trimeter acatalectic."

"I'll take that with a little water, please; it's rather strong," she said, saucily.

"I wish you'd give over your concert-room slang!" said he.

"Oh, slang!" she said. "Slang! and what was that you said, then? Wasn't that slang, or worse?"

"It's the description of a verse in Horace—a verse that is just as musical and graceful as you yourself, Kitty, when you like to behave yourself, which isn't often. And if you had any gratitude in your miserable little soul——"

"Oh, thank you," she said, snatching her hand away from his arm. "Mr. Impertinence, that's the way to your hotel. I'm going home."

But Kitty's wrath was usually evanescent; you had but to take her hand and she surrendered; and so it was that they were very soon climbing the steep little hill together, with much cheerfulness, in the gathering dusk, the while Kitty was lecturing her companion on the wisdom of consideration, and the advantages of politeness, and also hinting that, if he could but introduce the names of one or two distinguished political persons into his talk that evening, no harm would be done. And as it turned out, Miss Patience, who was a thin tall lady, with a somewhat dark face and severe gray eyes that made her look like a hawk, proved exceedingly placable. She avoided all reference to the quarrel. She hoped he was succeeding in London. Then she lit two candles and put them on the table of the little parlour; and drew down the window-blind; and rang the bell for supper.

Master Willie returned her kind treatment of him with liberal interest. For when the little maidservant had come in to lay the cloth, and when she had placed thereon the cold beef, and salad, and cheese, and bottled stout, and when Miss Romayne had, in honour of her guest, lit two more candles and put them on the chimney-piece, then they all sate down to the modest banquet, and Fitzgerald proceeded to inform Miss Patience as to what was being thought in London concerning some topics of Imperial interest. And he listened with profound attention to her views on these wide subjects; although, it is true, she spoke with much caution, and even mystery, as though she were afraid of revealing secrets. She was anxious, above all, to know whether the public approved the line the *Times* was taking with regard to the Government; and

also what sort of person the Editor of the *Times* was. Master Willie replied that he had met one or two highly distinguished literary people in London; but not the Editor of the *Times;* who was no doubt, on account of his position and duties, one not easily approachable.

"There again Sir Rowland Hill comes in!" exclaimed Miss Patience, triumphantly.

Fitzgerald looked puzzled.

"Think of how we are indebted to him," she continued —forgetting for the moment her mysterious manner—"for the diffusion of information, and for breaking down conventional barriers. Nowadays nobody has to bribe lacqueys to get to the great man's chamber. The penny post has done away with that. *That* is the messenger who cannot be denied. The humblest in the land can reach even to the throne."

Gracious heavens, thought Master Willie, has the woman been writing to the Queen? But all the same he agreed with her; the penny post was a noble institution; and if she referred to the Editor of the *Times* no doubt he was approachable that way. But Miss Patience, fixing her severe eyes on him, instantly disclaimed any such allusion. No; she declared she was merely thinking of the system; and of its wonderful advantages of communication between humble people and the great. Then she grew mysterious again; and began to put dark questions to him about the probable effect of a certain Royal marriage then being talked of, and whether it was not high time that the voice of the people should be heard.

But the evening was not entirely given up to politics; for Miss Patience, with the kindest consideration, and under the pretext of going to search for some papers in her own room, disappeared, and remained absent; and Kitty went to the little cottage piano; and her companion was not a great way off. Miss Romayne, if not a highly finished musician, was at least a sympathetic player; and well she knew the airs which would awaken the tenderest associations in her lover's heart. They were those that he had listened to when he and she were idling away the glad hours along country lanes or as they came home through

Inisheen in the evening, thinking of all the things that life had in store for them together.

"And so the Irish people," she said, letting her fingers touch the keys very gently, "were not aware of the pathos of 'The Bells of Shandon' until I revealed it to them?"

"I wasn't," said he, "and as I was the sub-editor of the *Cork Chronicle*, hadn't I the right to speak in the name of the Irish people?"

"I wonder who first began to make words for these old tunes. I suppose the tunes were in existence ages ago. Oh, that wasn't much of a discovery, Master Willie, because everybody sees how the air can be made pathetic if you take pains with it; but what I am certain of is that another bell-song, 'The Bells of Aberdovey,' was originally not a sentimental thing at all, but a splendid battle-march of the old Britons. If this wasn't Sunday evening; and if I wasn't afraid of frightening the neighbours, I could let you hear something with 'The Bells of Aberdovey.' Now, there is a task for you; write a war-song for that splendid march—a war-song with a tramp in it and thunder!"

"Play 'Farewell, but whenever you welcome the hour,' Kitty," said he, gently. "You remember you sang it in the boat coming back to Inisheen?"

"Do I remember? Am I ever likely to forget that fearful night," said she, "when I signed my soul away to witches in the moonlight?"

But she played the air, nevertheless; very exquisitely and softly. And she played many more, wandering from one to the other, while he listened in silence and dreamed over again the mornings, and the clear days, and the silent twilights they had spent so happily together. And well she knew—for she also had a tender memory—that however familiar these airs might be to others, there was no commonplaceness about them for him. She played one and then another; but it seemed as if they were all speaking of the sea, and of Inisheen, and of glad days gone by. These two were together so close now; the world shut out and forgotten. Why should there be any cruel gray dawn; and a wide gray sea: and then a disappearance into the frightful loneliness of London?

But the parting had to come, nevertheless—out there by the small gate, under the stars. Kitty was crying a little bit; what was the use of his coming over for one day only to have all the old sorrow to go through again? And then he chid her gently. Had it not been a long, happy, idyllic day—something to look back upon, perhaps for years? Was it not enough that even now, under the clear shining stars, he could hold her warm little hands for yet one other minute, and listen to the smooth and tender voice that he knew? Perhaps Kitty would rather not have him come back, then?

"Oh yes, oh yes," the faltering voice said, and she drew him closer to her, "never mind about the excuse, Willie. To-morrow—Wednesday—next week—any day, any hour, come back to me! That's all I want! And it isn't so much; and other people seem to have everything they want; and they are not nearly as grateful as I should be. Ah, must you really go?"

But the last word took a long while in saying; and even after she had given him the last kiss and the last blessing; and when she had watched him disappear away into the darkness of the night, she still stood by the little gate there, trying in vain to dry her eyes before going into the house again, and wondering why fate should be so cruel to some, while others were so happy.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN LONDON AGAIN.

At length the fateful day arrived for the issuing to the British public of the first number of the new magazine, and Fitzgerald was glad to be able to draw a long breath of relief. During these past two or three weeks his labours had been indeed hard. He had been constituted a sort of intermediary between the managerial and the editorial departments, everybody wanting to hold him responsible for everything.

"Mr. Fitzgerald," the distressed manager would say, bringing him the proof of an article written by the editor. "Do look here, if you please. The 'vile decoctions being continually invented and supplied to the public in the shape of effervescing drinks.'"

"Well?" said Fitzgerald on that particular occasion. "Why not? where's the harm?"

"We've eleven different firms," cried the manager, almost in despair, "advertising their effervescing drinks and mineral waters!"

"They must imagine sporting people to be a thirsty race," said Fitzgerald, laughing. "Very well, I'll get Mr. Clarke to take the phrase out, if it's likely to hurt anybody."

Then again Mr. Scobell would call in some morning, perhaps with a proof of the same article in his hand.

"Look here, Fitzgerald. Look here, my dear f'lah. This won't do at all. You'll shock the public, I tell you you'll shock the public. Look at this—'that numerous

and important section of the British wealthier classes who have long ago given up the fear of God, but who are kept in pretty fair social order by the fear of gout.' It won't do, Fitzgerald, I tell you it won't do. You must ask Clarke to cut that out. I told him I wouldn't have any d—d atheistical Radical stuff in a paper I was responsible for; I'm not going into sassiety as the proprietor of a d—d Radical and atheistical journal."

But this was a far more serious matter, for if Hilton Clarke were to know that Mr. Scobell had been furnished with proofs of the articles, or had expressed any opinion about them, there would be the very mischief to pay. So Master Willie had to assure the capitalist that the most perverse ingenuity could not discover a trace of atheism or Radicalism in any one of the contributions that had been written for the *Household Magazine*, that Hilton Clarke would be perfectly astonished to hear of any such charge being brought against him, but at the same time, if there was a chance of any stupid person being offended by this chance remark of Hilton Clarke's, no doubt he, Clarke, would at once remove it.

Then he would go up to the Albany, and make some casual suggestions, in as pleasant a way as he could.

"Well, you see, Fitzgerald," Hilton Clarke said, promptly, in answer to these timid proposals, "I'm not going to edit the magazine in the interests of the advertising department. They'll want us to puff pianos next, and write reviews of window-curtains. And what idiot could be offended by a little joke like that? We can't write down to the microcephalous. Where are you going now?"

"I am going to have some luncheon, I think."

"Ah," said his chief, regarding him, "I suppose you can afford to do that now. But it is not wise. Nothing so certainly destroys the figure in time. I don't know how many years it is now since I gave it up: nothing between eleven and eight is my rule. Oh, by the way, can you help me? have you sufficient ingenuity to suggest the kind of present one might buy for a lady—well, how am I to explain it? Something that will not be merely for vulgar use—such as she would have to buy in any case; and yet

on the other hand something pretty that would not attract too much attention as a gift."

"I don't quite understand," said Fitzgerald.

"It is difficult to define," said the other, absently. "I have been puzzling over it myself. I daren't give her a piece of jewellery; for that would provoke questions. And of course I wouldn't give her a piece of furniture, or costume, or anything she would buy in the ordinary course with her husband's money. That's the difficulty, and I can't hit on the *juste milieu*. It must be ornamental enough for a gift, and yet something she might have bought for herself——"

"What about a cigar-case?" said Master Willie, at a venture.

The other laughed.

"Very well hit. You're not far from the mark. But I think a cigar-case would not precisely have the effect of staving off awkward questions. Well, if you are going to lunch, ta-ta! Be prudent, and you'll be thankful at forty that you've still got a waist."

Now Hilton Clarke had a vein of light facetiousness in his nature, and but little satire; moreover, he was good-natured in a selfish and indolent sort of way. But he never nearer reached a sharp satirical stroke than when he advised this poor lad, who was on the verge of starvation, not to destroy his figure by over eating and drinking. The fact was that despite the most rigid economies Fitzgerald's worldly wealth was reduced to a sum of a few shillings, and that was slowly diminishing. The Irish trip had cost nearer three than two pounds. His father had written asking for two pounds more to make up the money to meet the bill, and he had got it. Then on the remainder Fitzgerald had continued to exist, if not to live, during these past three weeks and more. He gave up his only luxury —that single glass of ale with his dinner. The amount of walking he did was incredible, for he had much hurrying to and fro, and he would not take an omnibus. The luncheon that Hilton Clarke had warned him against generally consisted of a biscuit, with sometimes an apple. And he had given up going in to see his artist friend John Ross, because

he could not ask him in return to a banquet of tinned meat, bread, and beer.

His salary having begun four weeks before, the *Household Magazine* now owed him a sum of £16; and if that money had been in the hands of Mr. Silas Earp, or owing to him by the proprietor, Mr. Scobell, he would not have had the slightest hesitation in making application for it. But somehow or other—he could not himself strictly analyse the feeling—it was impossible for him to go and ask for the money from Hilton Clarke, in whose hands he understood it was. He was certain that if Clarke knew he was in want of it, he would have it at once. No doubt it was owing to mere carelessness that he had not had it already. And to go and confess his need of it: would not that be almost like bringing a charge of want of consideration against one who had greatly befriended him? There may have been a little pride mixed up in this feeling; an indisposition to confess that, having scarcely a penny left in the world, he could not write home to his own people for supplies. But the chief notion he had was undoubtedly that such an appeal would cause Hilton Clarke to be vexed about his own thoughtlessness; and Fitzgerald was a trifle sensitive himself; and did not like the thought of giving that pain to any one else. And so he contentedly trudged all over London (the printing offices were in the City Road) instead of taking omnibuses; and he lived on next to nothing; and gave up—but this was hard—his nightly chat with Ross, rather than make an application that would cause Hilton Clarke to accuse himself of inconsiderateness. This conduct may have been Quixotic; the only sure thing about it was that it could not go on for ever. That small stock of jealously-guarded shillings grew fatally smaller and smaller.

On the afternoon of the day on which the *Household Magazine* was finally issued, Hilton Clarke, Fitzgerald, Silas Earp, and Mr. Scobell left London by one of the afternoon boats for Greenwich, to dine there at the invitation of the last-named. It was not merely the prospect of having for once a substantial dinner that put Master Willie in good spirits. They were all in good

spirits. So far as could be judged, the new venture promised to be successful. The quantity of advertisements that had been secured was remarkable. The "trade" had subscribed liberally for the first number; in fact, the last thing that had to be done before they went down to Charing Cross was to send word to the City Road to print a further five hundred copies. The poster, scarlet letters on a white ground, was effective; it was conspicuous on the hoardings they passed; and needless to say, they looked out for it. Mr. Scobell talked as if the whole scheme had been his own; and pooh-poohed his manager's cautious reminders to the effect that the advertisers were always willing to patronise a first number, and that the sale could not be even approximately gauged until they began to get back the "returns." The capitalist would not hear of any such qualifications. He was assured of success. The richer section of the public could not fail to see what an invaluable manual this would make. Even with a moderate sale the margin of profit at a shilling would be large. And so he paid for all their tickets to Greenwich.

Fitzgerald had not been down the Thames before, and to him it was a wonderful and a beautiful sight; the summer afternoon shining warm on the masses of shipping, on the gray Tower, on the surging stream. And then, when they reached Greenwich and the hotel there, and when he went out on to the balcony of the little private room, there was something that was more than beautiful in the sunset streaming along the wide reach of the river. There was a touch of the pathetic in it. That very wideness suggested the nearness of the sea. And was not the sea the great bond of association with those who were far away? He thought of Inisheen; and that seemed sad; for now there would be no *Fairy Frigate*—that was the fanciful name that Kitty had given to the boat he and she used to go out to row in—there would be no *Fairy Frigate* gliding over the golden waters, with the blades of the oars shining in the sunlight as they dipped and rose again. Cannot you take her a message, then, you wide, rushing waters, and you, great ships, floating down with the dying day? Alas! the distance is too great; she is so far away

she cannot hear; and there is one whose heart is so full of the thought of her, and so burdened with the sadness of being remote from her, that he has not much of a mind for the festivities to which he is summoned within. A hand is laid on his shoulder.

"Twenty pounds that I can tell you what you are thinking of!" says Hilton Clarke.

Master Willie starts up from his reverie.

"She looks like a Norwegian," he says, "the barque there with the green hull."

And yet after all, when they had sat down to the very elaborate feast prepared within, and when their host was descanting on the merits of one or two of the wines he had ordered, the humour of the situation, so far as he, that is Fitzgerald, was concerned, could not escape him. It seemed to him that all the dinners he had not had for the past month were now being offered him, when he could make no use of them. It looked ridiculous that one who had been living on next to nothing should find himself able, nay, constrained, to send away dish after dish only tasted, when tasted at all.

"To-morrow," he said to himself, "when I shall be feeling myself very hollow about two o'clock, I shall be saying, 'What a fool I was, then, not to have had some more of that turbot!' This wine, now. Twelve shillings a bottle, I suppose. Six glasses to the bottle, probably; two shillings a glass. I drink it; and I have drunk what would have kept me in beer for a week. There is something wrong about the constitution of the human organism. When you can get plenty to eat and drink, you ought to be able to lay in a store against future need. What is the use of all this to me, if I am to be hungry again to-morrow?"

"Well, now, gentlemen," said he of the red face and the bristly yellow-white whiskers, as he held up a glass of wine between him and the light and then put it on the table again, "I did not ask you to come to Greenwich to talk business; but I think we are entitled to congratulate ourselves all round, I do really. I say it's a deuced good-looking periodical we've turned out. I call it a respectable-looking, a gentlemanly sort of looking magazine. I'm not

ashamed of it. I'm not ashamed to have it lying in my drawing-room, and when any one comes in I'm not ashamed if they take it up. What I say is, give a good thing, and charge a good price. I think twelve shillings is too much for this champagne, as I tell ye; but I consider it's as good a glass of wine as any I've got in my own cellar, and so I don't grumble. I'm for having good things. Give people good things; and they'll pay. A shilling a week is a good lot; but it looks respectable to have a thing like that lying about; it looks as if you wanted a country-house or a steam-yacht, and were looking out. My wife had it lying in her drawing-room yesterday when Lady Ipswich called; and Lady Ipswich said she'd order it from her bookseller at once. Now that's what I like; I want to have it talked about in sassiety. And I hope, Clarke, your friend Gifford will give us a flaming article about it; I'd have asked him to come down to-day, but I thought we'd better be private. I suppose you'll drop him a line?"

"Mr. Gifford," said Hilton Clarke, with a slight emphasis on the "Mr.," "is peculiar. It would be better to leave him to discover the extraordinary merits of the shilling's worth for himself. Oh, talking of discoveries, Fitzgerald," he added, turning to his neighbour, "did you read the review of 'Daphne's Shadow'?"

Fitzgerald, with a sudden flush, admitted that he had; but Hilton Clarke, not perceiving his embarrassment, or whatever it might have been, laughed lightly.

"That was the *Liberal Review* all over. The most portentous discoveries! The well-known this and the well-known that under thin disguises: a wonderful study of contemporary life and society in England——"

"Then have you read the book? Do you think it is trumpery?" said Fitzgerald, eagerly; he was so anxious to justify himself to himself.

"The book!" said Hilton Clarke, with a sort of good-natured scorn. "To call such a thing a book. Twopence-halfpenny-worth of persiflage; the rest of the coppers in cheek; then throw in a few allusions to current politics; and the British public will take your mere names as types of English character. What Gifford will do about our

magazine it is impossible to say. He may think it trivial. He may regard it as the servant of Mammon; and he is not too well-affected towards the rich. But one can't say. He may make a discovery about it; about the possibility of converting fox-hunters to the study of higher things—who knows? And then when he gets into a tempest of conviction, he rides the whirlwind. He'd be willing to see half the human race hanged to show the other half that capital punishment was a mistake."

Well, human nature is but human nature, after all; and it is possible that Fitzgerald, after that rejection of his anxiously-written article, may not have been so quick as he would otherwise have been to resent these scornful taunts that Hilton Clarke occasionally directed against the *Liberal Review* and its editor. But none of these affected Master Willie's secret consciousness that, if the two ways of regarding human life were offered him as alternatives, he would rather have that of the *Liberal Review* than that of the *Weekly Gazette*. The most desperate thing in the world seemed to him to be hopelessness. Your conviction might be wrong; but at least it gave you something to look forward for. And at twenty-three one is busier with the future than the past.

The evening went on pleasantly enough; and coffee and cigars did not tend to diminish that halo of success which already seemed to surround the new magazine. Indeed, so satisfied was Mr. Scobell with the gentlemanly appearance of the periodical, and with his own relations to the enterprise, that he broadly hinted his intention of sharing any great increase of prosperity with these coadjutors of his.

"I am not a money-grubber," said he, leaning back in his chair to watch the smoke ascend. "I don't worship the golden calf. I like to have plenty of money; and I have plenty of money——"

"I wish some more of us could say as much," said Hilton Clarke; but the remark was an unfair one, for Mr. Scobell was not really boasting of his wealth.

"I was going to say," continued the capitalist, glancing at Clarke somewhat reproachfully, "that I have plenty of

money because I am not an extravagant man. I think when a man has a thorough well-managed establishment in town, a good cook and a good cellar, a couple of hacks for the park, a barouche for his wife, and then, don't you know, a snug little place in the country, where he can keep a good glass of wine for his friends, and give them a day through the turnips, or a mount if they are hunting men, don't you know, I say he should be content, and not want to win the Derby or have the biggest deer-forest in Scotland. I haven't gone into literature to make money, not I. What I say is, if it is a big success, let them share it who made it——"

"Then Fitzgerald should have three-fourths," said Hilton Clarke, with a laugh, "for he has done three-fourths of the work."

"I don't say I wouldn't take a fair return for my money," said Mr. Scobell, grandly. "I don't say that. But when I go into literature, it isn't to make money. I want to have my name connected with a thorough good thing. I don't want to go into my club, and hear men say, 'That's Scobell; he's the proprietor of a d—d low Radical print.' I say we should stick up for our own country. I don't see any better. If there's a country where you'll find better fighting men, and handsomer women—ay, and horses too—well, I don't know where it is. I think we are very well off. You can get the best of everything in London, if you'll only pay a fair price for it. Look at Covent Garden now; what is there you can't get there? And then you get a lot of low trades-unionists and Radicals trying to stir up discontent; and setting class against class; and trying to put a lot of stuff into the heads of the farm-labourers. What I say is, let well alone. I don't see any other country better governed. I don't see any other country better off. If Church and State have brought us where we are, then I'm for Church and State; I want none o' their Liberty, Equality, and Stupidity. I say we're precious well off."

"You are, my dear Scobell, but I am not," observed Hilton Clarke, pleasantly. "However, you need have no fear of the *Household Magazine* adventuring on these

troubled waters. We will assume that everything is for the best in this favoured island; and in the meantime we had better think of getting to the railway-station."

Here Mr. Earp, who was a large, heavy, bilious-looking man, and who had scarcely spoken all the evening, looked at his watch.

"There is one thing I would like to mention," he said slowly. "Very soon people will be leaving town."

"Doubtless," said Hilton Clarke, whom he now particularly addressed.

"And you may be drawing attention to it in an article—perhaps more than once," the melancholy-looking man continued.

"Well, that is possible."

"Well, Mr. Clarke," said the other, hesitatingly, "if it is all the same to you, I would rather not have any such article. It is, if I may say so, imprudent. All the daily papers do it. They have articles about London being empty; about the dead season; about everybody being abroad. And then, you see, how can you ask the advertisers to keep on paying money, when you're telling them at the same time that everybody is away?"

"Oh, I see!" exclaimed Mr. Clarke as he rose from the table. "It is the advertisers you are thinking of?" And then he laughed, and put his hand on Fitzgerald's shoulder as they left the room together. "There, Fitzgerald, don't forget these hints. Rules for the editing of a newspaper they might be called. 'Uphold Church and State; and in August don't remind advertisers that people have left town.'"

"We might have them printed and hung up in the office, for the guidance of contributors," said his companion.

They returned to town apparently very well pleased with each other and with the prospects of the new periodical. But just before reaching Charing Cross something occurred which was calculated to give Fitzgerald a still more favourable recollection of that evening.

"I suppose you'll take a hansom, Fitzgerald?" Hilton Clarke asked of him casually.

"No; I'll walk," was the reply.

"Walk? To Fulham?"

"To the Fulham Road, at least."

It is impossible to say whether or no this answer may have suggested to Hilton Clarke some suspicion about Fitzgerald's circumstances, but at all events he said, a minute after, and apparently without premeditation—

"Oh, I quite forgot, Fitzgerald, that you've drawn nothing from the treasury during these past weeks. That was my forgetfulness; for I am responsible to you. Why didn't you remind me——"

"It was of no consequence," said Fitzgerald, hastily; but how glad he was that Hilton Clarke had not had to be reminded!

"Well, then, shall I give you something on account? Oh, don't be bashful, man! This is a business evening. I should not have been so remiss——"

"It is of no consequence at all!" said Fitzgerald again; it was quite enough for him that his friend had remembered. He had had enough eating and drinking for a time. He would willingly go back to dry biscuits and apples.

"When I was your age I knew what it was to be hard up," continued Hilton Clarke, "and sometimes I know it now when paymasters are neglectful. So I'm not going to incur that charge, whilst I remember. But I find I've only a sovereign or two. Scobell, lend me ten pounds, like a good fellow; Earp can score it up against me at the office."

"Oh, certainly," said Mr. Scobell, though he seemed a little surprised on hearing that Fitzgerald had up to that moment received no salary.

The two bank-notes were handed to Clarke, who in turn passed them on, and Fitzgerald, so far from having any hesitation about accepting them, was altogether delighted. He had looked forward with the utmost shrinking to the obvious necessity, sooner or later, of having to recall Hilton Clarke to a sense of his carelessness. It was now clear to him that Mr. Clarke would so have regarded an application from him—as a reminder that he had been culpably neglectful. And now to find this deplorable thing removed was an inexpressible relief; and the first thought he had was that he would invest a portion of this sum in paying for a ride on an omnibus, get home quickly, and see if John

75398

Ross were still awake and at work, that he might, as he surely would, rejoice in the good fortune of his nearest neighbour.

When Fitzgerald reached the little courtyard in the Fulham Road, there was no doubt possible about Ross's being at home, whether he was at work or no, for loud and martial strains were resounding through the big empty studio. It was with the utmost difficulty that Fitzgerald could make himself heard. Then the bawling suddenly ceased, and the door was opened.

"Come in, man; come in; what's the need o' ceremony? What for did ye wait to knock?"

"I heard the end of 'Scots wha hae' by waiting," said Master Willie, getting a chair for himself.

"Ay," said his host, fetching him a canister of tobacco. "I'm thinking King Edward, poor man, thought he was never going to hear the end o' they Scotch folk while he was alive. I daresay whenever he found himself with nothing to do—wi' half an hour to spare, like—he would say to his friends, 'Come and let us sit down and curse Scotland.' Well, now, what have ye been about; what has come over ye?"

"I have been very busy; but the magazine I was telling you about has come out at last; and to-night I have just got back from a dinner at Greenwich which was meant to celebrate the occasion."

"But ye're sober!" exclaimed the other.

"Why not?"

"What's the use o' going all that way for a dinner if ye come home sober? Ay," said he, regarding him critically, "but if they've sent ye back sober, they've put an extra bit o' colour in your cheeks. It's no often one sees colour like that in London. It's no a London complexion at a', it reminds one more o' a cornfield in summer, and a strapping young fellow lying by the side of a stook, wi' his face half-turned away frae the sun. Man, I'd like to have a try at your head. You go on smoking; and let me hear all your story since I saw ye last. I'd just like to have a try."

He threw aside his pipe; and quickly stuck on his easel a sheet of light-brown board, and took up his palette and

colours. And then he began to walk up and down a bit, ultimately putting colours on the palette, and studying Fitzgerald's head from different points of view.

"Man," he said, "ye've more character about ye than I thought. Ye'll have a fine head when ye grow up."

Fitzgerald thought he had done growing, as he was three-and-twenty, and five foot ten. But by this time he was familiar with Ross's way of working, and with the jerky observations with which he usually accompanied that, and so he did not interrupt. After a while, Ross suddenly went to a portfolio that stood near the wall, and after having rudely tumbled about a number of sheets he brought back a large and dusty photograph—of Giorgione's armed warrior in the Uffizi.

"That's what your head 'll be in middle age."

"That! I don't see the least likeness," said Fitzgerald.

"But I do. It's my business. Of course you'll no be dark like that; but that's your nose and forehead. Ay, and the mouth too. But the complexion makes a great difference; and the hair; have ye been burning yourself in the sun a' the day? Where got ye that straight nose in Ireland?"

"I suppose there are as many there as elsewhere," said Fitzgerald, trying to steal a look at the board on the easel, but failing.

"I dinna believe ye," said Ross, who was now working very eagerly—with snatches of contemplative whistling coming in at intervals. "I've watched the shearers that come over from Belfast. There's no one in twenty that escapes from the general type—the turned-up nose and long upper lip. Ay, and so the wonderful new magazine's out. Well, tell us all about it, man; ye need no be feared about altering your expression; it's only the tan o' the sunlight I'm trying at, though whether I can do anything—but there's no two curls o' your hair the same colour, man! What do ye mean by that? There's an inconsistency about ye that's aggravating. Well, about the magazine?"

So Fitzgerald told him all that had happened; and dwelt on his great good fortune in having been able to make so early a start in London, thanks to one or two kind

friends; and said how everybody was pleased at the prospects of this venture.

"Ay, ay," said the broad-shouldered, red-bearded little man as he stepped back a yard or two from the easel, and regarded his handiwork, "and that may partly account for the colour, as well as the warm day, and the trip to Greenwich. The flush of success, eh? And I warrant there's a young lass somewhere that's just as pleased as yoursel'. . ."

Then he suddenly bawled out in a prodigious and raucous voice—looking intently at his work the while—

"And we'll take a right gude willie-waught,
For the days o' auld langsyne!"

However, this vocal outburst was not the result of self-satisfaction.

"What put it into my head," he continued, in a series of inconsecutive growls, as he stepped back and then stepped forward, and then bit the end of his brush, "to try such a blaze of flesh-colour? It's the most infernal thing in the world. I'm a landscape painter; at least I say I am; I think I'll take to house-fronts and door-steps. The portrait-painting I can do is a wee dabbie o' red and white under an auld wife's cap if she's coming along the road about twa miles off.

'And we'll take a right gude willie-waught'——"

But there was no joy left in the jovial song: nothing but perplexity and irritation.

"Don't bother about it to-night," said Master Willie. "Let's have a quiet smoke and a chat."

The next thing he saw was Ross suddenly advance and with one stroke drive his fist right through the frail board, sending the easel and everything flying and sprawling across the room. Then that action having apparently assuaged his passion, he quietly took the palette from the thumb of his left hand and laid it down.

"I'm a failure," he said, drawing along a chair to the bare wooden table. "Nothing I try will do. Ye are one o' the lucky ones; only ye dinna ken the contentment there is in a glass o' good Scotch whisky. I do. But d'ye

think I'm to be cast down because I canna pent? No while I can light a pipe!"

"But it's nonsense your talking like that!" exclaimed Fitzgerald, who had been privileged to look over these canvases, and who, little as he knew about painting, had been greatly struck with the strangely vivid effects he saw here and there, along with, as he imagined, an absolute want of definite construction, or technical skill. Amid all this confused chaos of impressions—which he was not surprised the dealers had for the most part regarded as quite hopeless—he had seen bits that were to him a sort of revelation. Moreover, he had gone out once or twice into the country with John Ross; he had listened to his talk; had watched the things he had pointed out; and it seemed to him that the world had grown a great deal more interesting since this red-haired Scotchman had taught him how to look at it.

"It is nonsense your talking like that," repeated Fitzgerald. "And very soon the world will find out, and will tell you, whether you can paint or not."

"But do I complain?" said the other, fetching over some fresh water and a tumbler. "Do I howl? Have you seen me lie down on the floor and squeal? Bless the laddie, I've my wits left. And I'm thinking that, now this machine o' yours is fairly on the rails, ye'd better have a day's holiday the morn; and I'll take ye and show ye as fine a bit o' wilderness within five miles o' this very place as ye'd want to find in Canada. Will ye go?"

"Won't I?" said Master Willie, who had discovered that a walk in the country with this keen-eyed, talkative, dogmatic person was in itself a sort of liberal education. But then again he added: "No: not to-morrow. We will put it off for a few days, till I see how this thing is really going."

"You are as cautious as a Scotchman!" said his friend, with a laugh. "Well, here's to the magazine, and to you, and to all good fellows; and may the black deil be aye a long way away from us!".

CHAPTER IX.

IN STRAITS.

THE high hopes that had been raised by the demand for the first number of the *Household Magazine* were very speedily abated. An ominously large number of the copies came back unsold from the newsvendors. Worse than that, as week after week passed, the small minimum circulation on which, after these returns, they had calculated, showed signs of still further shrinking. In these disheartening circumstances it must be said for Mr. Scobell that he played a man's part; he accused nobody; he was not dismayed; nay, he ventured even yet to hope.

"Rome wasn't built in a day," he would say. "A shillin's a good lot. And if the public won't buy it, at all events we've done our best. I'm not ashamed of it when I see it on a bookstall. I'm not ashamed to see it lying on the table of my club. I say there's nothing to be ashamed of about it; I call it a gentlemanly looking thing. We'll have to be content with small beginnings. Mind, a shillin's a shillin'."

Hilton Clarke, on the other hand, was disappointed, and inclined to be peevish, and openly laid the blame on the management. There was no pushing of the magazine. They had not spent enough money in advertising. Indeed, he very soon showed that he was hopeless of the whole affair; and it was only by the exercise of much tact that Fitzgerald kept him, as far as he could be kept, to his duties as editor.

With Fitzgerald, however, he remained great friends;

and it was Master Willie's privilege to listen for many a half-hour together to his companion's ingenious and clever talking, that was full of a very curious and subtle penetration in literary matters. Once or twice it almost seemed to him a pity that a man who could talk so well should not write a little more; and indeed on one occasion he went the length of hinting to Mr. Hilton Clarke that the world had a right to expect from him some more definite work than he had already done. They were walking in Hyde Park.

"You mean some substantive publication?" said he, as he crumbled up some bread he had brought with him and began to throw it to the ducks in the Serpentine; this being a favourite amusement of his. "I doubt whether the public care much about viewy books. They can manage an essay now and again. I have thought of it, though. I could bring together two or three things I have written, under some such title as 'Laws and Limitations of Art.'"

"Why not?" said Fitzgerald, eagerly. Here, indeed, would be something he could triumphantly place before Kitty. No longer would she be able to ask of his literary hero "What has he done?" "I am sure it would be most interesting," he continued. "I am sure no one could make such a subject more interesting; and it wants clearness; there is so much confusion about it——"

"But some day or other——"

"That is what you are always saying!"

"Wait a bit. I say some day or other I mean to tackle something with a trifle more of human nature in it. I might begin it in the *Household Magazine*, only it would be thrown away on squires. Perhaps it would not run to a book."

"But the subject?"

"The Private Meditations of Zenobia's Husband."

"Zenobia's Husband——?"

"I forget what the gentleman's name was; most people do; that's the point of the situation. But you remember that the lovely and virtuous Queen of Palmyra *had* a husband; and he must have had his own little thoughts

about things. I suppose now," he continued, throwing away the last of the crumbs, and linking his arm in his companion's as they set out again, "I suppose now you think that before writing such a book I ought to go and qualify by marrying somebody."

"You might do worse."

"I doubt it. I shall never marry. Life is only endurable when you have all round you an atmosphere of possibility. Then the unexpected may happen; each new day may bring new relations. But when you marry your fate is fixed; life is closed; the romance of it vanished——"

"But what do you call the romance of it?" said Fitzgerald, bluntly. "Going philandering after another man's wife?"

"I perceive, Mr. Fitzgerald," said Hilton Clarke, blandly, "that on one occasion I must have been indiscreet. However, as you don't even know the name of the lady of the cigars no great harm has been done. Feuerbach, if you remember, maintains that a being without attributes is non-existent. Now a person whose sole attribute, so far as you know, is that she smokes cigars, can only exist a very little bit, as far as you are concerned. The Lady Irmingarde, now: she wouldn't allow even a cigarette to sully the purity of her sweet mountain air?"

"The Lady Irmingarde?" Fitzgerald repeated, innocently.

"I can imagine her. A coquettish nose: very blue eyes; a little freckled; a mischievous laugh; and a figure that would go charmingly in a short dress, with a milking-pail."

"It doesn't take much trouble to imagine all that," said Fitzgerald. "You can see it any day in an operetta."

"Well, you know, some prefer the maid with the milking-pail; while some prefer a woman of the world, with wit and courage and dexterity, as well as beauty. Don't let us quarrel. In fact, Fitzgerald," he said, in a franker way of speaking, but still with that careless air, "I am rather in a muddle. Who was it who said 'My mind to me a kingdom is'? My kingdom, I know, sometimes gets

very rebellious—tries to push me off the throne, in fact. If it doesn't take care, I'll abdicate altogether. And so, to let matters settle down a little, I am going to retreat for a while to Dover. I was thinking of running down this afternoon——"

"But the article for to-morrow!" exclaimed his assistant-editor.

"Oh, you can get something or other—do, like a good fellow. Print one of your 'Confessions of a Young Man.' I think they are excellent. It won't be throwing much away; for you can forward it to a publisher, and ask him to judge of the bulk by the sample. It will look better in type. You won't mind sacrificing one of them; and I'll do as much for you some other time."

This was the last of Hilton Clarke that Fitzgerald saw for many a day; and after his chief's departure for Dover he very speedily found that the whole work of editing the magazine and writing the literary section of it had to be borne on his own shoulders. Occasionally, a few contributions would be sent up from the Lord Warden hotel; but they were slight and unimportant. Nevertheless, Fitzgerald would not admit even to himself that this conduct showed any want of consideration on the part of his friend and hero. What if this seclusion were to lead to the production of one or other of those books that had been vaguely indicated? Ought he not to be proud to have the chance of lending a helping hand in this way? Or—for this suspicion would crop up from time to time—suppose that Hilton Clarke had got into some delicate entanglement in London from which the only sure escape was his prolonged absence from town? Master Willie worked away as hard as he could; and bore with equanimity the remonstrances of Mr. Scobell about the absence of the editor; and sacrificed not one only but several of the "Confessions of a Young Man," and tried to give the best account he could of his circumstances in his long letters to Kitty.

There was one very serious consideration, however, that could not be speciously glossed over; he was again almost penniless. Not even in leaving London had Hilton Clarke made any reference to money matters; though by that time

he was very considerably in Fitzgerald's debt. For all his work on the Magazine the latter had received nothing beyond the ten pounds Hilton Clarke had handed over on the journey back from Greenwich; and that sum, welcome as it was, could not be expected to last for ever, even if Kitty's birthday had not intervened, demanding a little souvenir. Sovereign after sovereign went, despite the most rigid economy. Again and again the dire necessity of having to remind Hilton Clarke of his thoughtlessness arose before his mind; and again and again he would put that off for a few days, making sure that Clarke would remember and write to him of his own accord. He had himself to blame. It was not a proper arrangement. He ought to have insisted on being put on some definite footing at the office, instead of being thus contracted out, as it were. That Hilton Clarke had drawn the full sum, month by month, he knew; for Mr. Silas Earp had casually mentioned it. It was beyond measure distressing to him to think of his friend being thus cruelly inconsiderate; but he held his peace; and went on with his work; and hoped for the best.

One night he was sitting alone, and perhaps rather down-hearted, for he had had no letter from Kitty these two days back, when he heard his Scotch friend ascending the stairs outside. John Ross had been for some time absent, sketching up the Thames; and the solitary lodging in the Fulham Road had been even more solitary since his departure. Master Willie was glad to hear that brisk footstep outside.

Then the sharp-eyed little red-haired man came into the room; and seemed to take in the whole situation at a glance.

"What's the matter with ye, man? Hard work? The London air? Are ye in the dumps about some young lass?"

"Well," said Fitzgerald, brightening up, "maybe I have been working too hard. The magazine isn't a very great success so far, you know. I have been offering some things in one or two other quarters; but it's like trying to squeeze through the eye of a needle."

"Time enough; time enough," said John Ross. "Your face is no the right colour."

Then he glanced suspiciously around.

"Where's your supper," he said abruptly.

Fitzgerald flushed, and said hastily—

"Oh, supper? supper? It isn't nine yet, is it?"

"It's nearer ten. Now, look here, my lad; you come down the stairs with me, and I'll show ye something. A fellow has sent me a kippered salmon frae the Solway, and if ye've never tasted a kippered salmon, then ye dinna ken how bountiful Providence has been to mortals. Come away down, man, and I'll brander ye a steak that'll make your mouth water—to say nothing o' your een, if ye happen to come across a wee bit lump o' pepper."

He would hear of no excuse; he carried off Fitzgerald; went below and lit the gas in the big, gaunt studio; also the stove; laid the table; cut a couple of steaks from the firm, ruddy-brown fish, and put them on the gridiron; fetched tumblers and bottles; and then, as he stood over the gridiron, and turned the salmon-steaks with a fork, he regaled his companion with "Auld Langsyne," one line whistled, the next sung, with occasionally a bit of a double shuffle coming in. It was clear that he was in very excellent spirits, or pretended to be.

Then when he had popped the frizzling hot steaks on a plate, and put them on the table, he drew in a couple of chairs.

"Come away, my boy. Pass the bread. Fitz, my laddie, I'm going to ask you an impertinent question. Have ye got any money?"

He affected to be very busy in cutting the loaf, and fetching a couple of lemons, and so on, so that he should not see any embarrassment his companion might betray.

"Not very much," was the answer, with a doubtful kind of laugh.

"I dinna want to borrow. I want ye to tell me if you've got any, that's all."

"As I say, I haven't very much."

"Have ye got any?" said the other, pertinaciously, and for a moment fixing his keen eyes on him.

"I've got four shillings," said Fitzgerald. "It isn't what you might call a princely fortune; but while I have it I sha'n't starve."

"Are ye so sure o' that?" said John Ross, pretending to be much occupied with the lemon he held. "I'm thinking ye *have* been starving yourself. Now I'm flush. And it's so seldom in my life I've had ower much money, I'd just like to try the effect o' lending ye a pound or two. Just think o' the luck! Just tell me this is anything but luck! There am I sitting in front o' the inn one afternoon, having a pipe, and little else to do. 'Landlord,' says I, 'get down your sign, man, and I'll repaint it for you.' Away the fat old fellow goes, and fetches a ladder, and down comes the rickety old board. Then soap and water: and a rub ower with megilp. Man, I took a fancy to the thing; the sodjer's red coat was fine, and I put in some trees, beside the inn, and a bit of a glimmer o' sunlight down the road. Ma certes, when it was dry, and hung up on the iron rod again, it looked fine I can tell ye! And that very afternoon—just think of the luck o't!—by comes a gentleman, and he wants a drink o' meal and water for his horse, and he begins to ask the landlord about the sign, and what does the fellow do but ask him to go in and look at my sketches?—me away down the river at the time in a punt. And then the upshot was that he bought two at £10 apiece; that was £20; and if the half o' that would be of use to you, ye're welcome to the loan of it, and may ye live until I ask ye for it."

Fitzgerald was deeply touched by this kindness on the part of one who knew almost nothing about him. What, indeed, could Ross know? It is true, the lad had clear and honest eyes, that were likely to win the confidence of a stranger; but it is more probable that this friendly offer was in great measure the result of that sort of subtle freemasonry that seems to exist among those who have a romantic affection for out-of-door sports and sights and sounds, and who have had opportunities of talking over these together.

"Are ye proud?" said John Ross, sharply.

"I don't know how to thank you," said Fitzgerald,

simply. "I—I think it is tremendously kind of you. I would take it in a minute if there was need——"

"How long do ye expect to live on four shillings?" demanded the other.

But then Fitzgerald proceeded to explain how there was a very considerable sum of money owing to him, and how from day to day he had been expecting it, or part of it.

"Bless me, laddie, ye seem to be clean daft!" Ross cried. "To go starving yourself deliberately, out o' sensitiveness for another man's feelings! Let him be as sensitive about you, to begin with! Nonsense, nonsense, man; get hold o' the money at once! I would make a hundred and fifty applications for it before I'd let both soul and body get down into my boots. The picture ye were when I went up to your room a while since! A snuff for his fine feelings——"

"Oh, but you don't know how grateful I ought to be to this Hilton Clarke," contended Fitzgerald, cheerfully. "Mind you, I've just been finding out for myself how difficult it is to get an entrance into London literature. And you see through him I got employment right at the beginning——"

"What on earth is the use of employment that ye're no paid for?"

"But the money is there. I can have it for the asking."

"In God's name ask for it then!" said his emphatic companion. "I dinna want to have to attend a funeral. A nice thing it would be for me to ken ye were just over my head, lying in a wooden box. No more kippered salmon for ye then. No more ale for ye—it's pretty clear, isn't it? No more long letters from a young lass somewhere. It's no *that* that's putting ye out?" he added, with another sharp glance.

"No, no; there's no trouble there," said Fitzgerald, brightly. "Nor indeed anywhere. I will hang on as long as I can with my four shillings; then, if I don't hear by that time, I will write. Now we will light up; and you will let me see the sketches you have brought back from the Thames."

They lit their pipes. But before fetching the canvases, Ross stepped over to a dusky recess, and brought back a brace of wild-duck—both beautifully-plumaged mallard—and threw them down.

"There," said he, "that's better than sketches. Take them with ye, since ye're bent on starving yourself. Bonnie birds, aren't they? That shows ye the use o' having a gun lying beside ye when ye're sketching in a punt."

"If you'd only bring some whisky with you," said Fitzgerald, laughing, "I think I could afford to ask you to have some dinner with me to-morrow night."

"But I will," responded his companion, seriously. "Dinner or supper or what ye like. And the next night as well, if ye're willin'; I'll see ye have two good meals before they make a corpse o' ye; and one wild-duck makes a good enough dinner, an excellent dinner, for two folk. Eh, man, if I had had a bit spaniel wi' me! Many's and many's the time I heard the duck quite close by me in the rushes, dipping their bills and flapping their wings. Then away would go the mallard with a whirr like a policeman's rattle; and then you'd hear the mother quack, quacking to the brood. Catch her leaving them till she had got them hidden somewhere! The drake I'm thinking is like the buck rabbit; catch a buck rabbit warning anybody, so long as he can show a clean pair o' heels and a white fud; but the doe, when ye startle her, down comes her hind legs on the ground with a whack ye can hear a hundred yards off, and if the young ones dinna take heed o' that they deserve what they're likely to get."

"Yes—but the sketches?" suggested Fitzgerald.

His companion had contentedly sat down again.

"Oh ay. I got some work done; I did a good deal o' work. Did ye ever see a kingfisher fishing?"

"No; they're not common with us in the south of Ireland."

"Man, I watched one for nearly half an hour last week; and the whole o' that time he never stirred a feather. He was on a stone, or maybe it was a withered stump, under a bush that was hanging ower the watter. I was beginning to doubt but that somebody had stuffed him, and put him

there to make a fool o' folk, when snap! down went his head and neck, and the next second there he was with a small fish crosswise in his beak. Then he twitched his head, or maybe he was striking the fish on the stump; then there was no fish visible; and then a kind o' streak o' blue flame went down across the rushes; that was the gentleman himself going off in a flash o' glory, as it were."

"Did you put him in your sketch?" asked Fitzgerald, insidiously.

"It's an ungainly kind o' a beast, too," continued John Ross, taking no heed of the hint. "Stumpy in shape. And there are too many colours when he's standing still like that. But once he's well on the wing you see nothing but blue—just a flash o' blue fire, that's fine enough when it crosses a long, standing clump o' yellow rushes; but then again when it crosses a dark bit o' shadow it's more than that; it gives a kind o' metallic jerk that gets beyond colour a'thegither. I used to sit and watch for them. It becomes a sort o' fascination; it's like waiting to hear a pistol-shot when ye see a man aiming."

"I suppose you did a little painting as well while you were up the river?" inquired Master Willie, dexterously.

"Pent? Bless the laddie, what did I go there for but to pent? I pented a signboard to begin wi', which was a good, honest piece o' work; and I made fifteen sketches at least; and I came home £20 richer than when I went, just to find a young idjut wearing himself away for want o' the common necessaries o' life. For that's what it comes to, my callant; and if ye'll no take the £10 I offer ye, I'll no leave grup o' ye until ye write and get the money that's your ain."

And indeed that was what it did come to; for so persistent was the Scotchman, that before he let his companion go that night, Fitzgerald had definitely promised that the next day, if no letter arrived for him in the morning, he would write to Dover, and remind Mr. Hilton Clarke that even the most willing hack must have its handful of corn.

CHAPTER X.

NEW FRIENDS.

JUST at this moment an incident occurred which seemed slight enough in itself, but which proved to have somewhat far-reaching consequences. Among these "Confessions of a Young Man" which Fitzgerald had been forced to print in the *Household Magazine* for lack of more substantial material, was a paper entitled "On Murder." It was chiefly an essay on the doubts of a young sportsman over the killing of beautiful and innocent creatures—his compunction on seeing them lying on the grass stone-dead and besmeared with blood, or, worse still, ineffectually fluttering with broken wing to try to get away from him on his approach. Or suppose he has wounded one of those sea-birds that are extraordinarily tenacious of life; and finds himself forced to murder in cold blood, and with protracted difficulty, this beautiful, wild-eyed, panting thing? Who could ever forget the mute glance of a wounded roedeer? Or fail to be struck with remorse at the piteous squeal of a kicking and struggling hare? These were the moments of reflection, of contemplation, that occurred in the eagerness of pursuit; they were not pleasant—especially to the sportsman who was alone. But then again the paper went on to speak of doubts on the other side—doubts whether it was not possible to cultivate sentiment to an unwholesome degree. To live by the taking of life was a universal law of nature. Animals had to be killed for food; and if it was objected that the sportsman shot for amusement and not for the procuring of food, one might ask a rabbit which

he preferred,—to be killed outright by a charge of No. 5 shot, even in the way of amusement, or to be snared by the keeper for the market, strangling for a couple of hours perhaps with the brass wire getting tighter and tighter. Then the training and hardihood and skill and health of the highest of all the animals had to be considered. In short, the whole essay was a conflict between Mr. W. Fitzgerald as a hardy, eager, and practised wild-fowl stalker, and Mr. W. Fitzgerald as a literary person of acute, and perhaps even poetic, sympathies.

It is just possible that a consciousness of the impossibility of reconciling these two people had been borne in upon the writer of the article during its progress; for he wound up with an appeal *ad rem*—that is to say, a description of a day's cliff-shooting in the south of Ireland. How, he asked, could one be expected to pause and consider such questions at such a time in such a place? The Atlantic thundering on to the rocks below; the steep cliffs ablaze in the sunlight; the dark mystery of the caves; then a sudden whirr of half-a-dozen pigeons, the quick snap-shot right and left (your feet the while steadying you on a ledge not fourteen inches wide), and then the scramble down to the beach after the slain. The exhilaration of sky and ocean and buffeting sea-winds was fatal, he contended, to metaphysics; even the still small voice of conscience was lost in one's anxiety not to slip on the close crisp turf and go headlong into the seas below. And so forth, and so forth; however the conflict may have gone in the previous portions of the essay, it was the pupil of Andy the Hopper that had the last word.

Well, on the day following the publication of this article, the following note came to the office:—

"Mrs. Chetwynd presents her compliments to the editor of the *Household Magazine*, and would be much obliged if he would kindly acquaint her with the name and address of the writer of the papers entitled 'The Confessions of a Young Man.'

"Hyde Park Gardens, Monday, 17th."

Now Fitzgerald had had enough experience of the multi-

tude of people who write to newspaper offices on the slightest pretext: and he scarcely looked at this note twice. No doubt, if he sent his name and address, he would receive in reply a pamphlet by a member of the Anti-Vivisectionist Society, or an appeal for a subscription to the Home for Lost Dogs, or some such thing. So he merely sent a polite reply, in his capacity as assistant-editor, to the effect that it was a rule of the office not to furnish such information; and thought no more of the matter.

However, the next day brought another note.

"DEAR SIR—I respectfully apologise for my intrusion; but I think if you knew the circumstances of the case you would not refuse the request which my aunt made to you yesterday. She is an old lady, who has met with a great sorrow; and she has been very much interested in the series of papers mentioned in her note as recalling to her something of one who was dear to her. I may say frankly that she is very desirous of seeing the gentleman who wrote these papers, if only to thank him for the pleasure he has given her; and I am sure he would not grudge giving up a few minutes of his time some afternoon, if you would have the kindness to forward this request to him.

"I am, dear Sir,

"Your obedient servant,

"MARY CHETWYND.

"Hyde Park Gardens, Tuesday."

Fitzgerald paid more attention to this note, and even re-read it carefully—with some little admiration of the pretty handwriting. No doubt, also, in other circumstances, he would not have hesitated for a moment to respond to this simple, frank, and kindly invitation. But the truth was, at this moment he was in no mood for making new acquaintances. Not a word or line had come from Dover; and his four shillings had been reduced to eighteenpence. Kitty was in Dublin; her engagement finished; her immediate prospects somewhat uncertain. Moreover, if it came to that, his clothes were a trifle too shabby for the paying of afternoon-calls; and so, having written a formal note as from the editor, informing Miss Chetwynd that her letter

had been forwarded to the contributor referred to, he folded up the sheet of note-paper and laid it aside, considering the correspondence closed.

Two days after he found among the letters awaiting him at the office one with the welcome Dover post-mark on it. He eagerly opened it.

"DEAR FITZGERALD—Don't be in a hurry. I'll make it all right.

"Yours ever,

"HILTON CLARKE.

"*P.S.*—I enclose a bit of copy."

He looked at that for some time, not knowing what to think. In the midst of his perplexity, Mr. Scobell made his appearance; and Mr. Scobell was evidently in a very bad temper.

"I say, Fitzgerald, this won't do at all, you know," said he, putting his hat down and taking a chair. "I say this won't do at all. I've stood it long enough."

"What?" said the assistant-editor, calmly.

"You know very well. I'm not going to put my money into a thing simply for the amusement of somebody else. I say it isn't fair; I don't call it gentlemanly. The magazine is going down every week; I say the circulation is going down; and it never was much; and it'll soon be nothing. And all the time I'm paying my money to a gentleman who amuses himself at Dover! I won't stand it. It's false pretences. I pay him; he's my servant; and he should do his work."

"But he writes there," said Fitzgerald. "I have just this minute got an article in MS. from him."

"Oh, it's no use trying to humbug me——"

"I beg your pardon, I am not trying to humbug you," said Fitzgerald, with an angry colour in his face, "and if you've got any complaint to make against Hilton Clarke, you might make it to himself. I'm not responsible for him."

"No, nobody is responsible; and the magazine is going to the devil!" exclaimed Mr. Scobell. "That's just it. I'm losing money every week; and nobody is responsible!"

Master Willie was on the point of saying that precious

little of Mr. Scobell's money had found its way into his pocket; but he refrained.

"Has Hilton Clarke ever denied his responsibility?" said he, somewhat warmly. "It is not necessary for an editor always to be on the spot. If the magazine is not succeeding, it is a pity; but I suppose it was a commercial speculation, like any other. I consider that Hilton Clarke has put very good work into it; and his name as editor was of itself valuable——"

"Look here, Fitzgerald," said Mr. Scobell, in a milder tone, "I'm not complaining of you. You are doing your work well enough; and Clarke's too, for the matter of that. You may stick up for him, if you like; but what I say is that it isn't fair of him to go and neglect his business. I pay him. Confound it, I pay him; he takes my money; and amuses himself at the Lord Warden hotel! If you were getting his salary, I could understand your sticking up for him. And the airs he gives himself. 'Scobell, my dear fellow!' But he takes my money; and I'm getting tired of it; and that's the long and the short of it."

"I don't think," said Fitzgerald, slowly, as if he wanted to gain nerve, "I don't think, Mr. Scobell, that if Mr. Clarke knew you were discontented, he would wish you to continue the magazine. He would probably ask you to give it up at once."

"Discontented!" exclaimed Scobell, with a not unnatural indignation. "Haven't I a right to be discontented? Isn't it losing me money every week?"

"But that possibility was before you when you started it," observed Fitzgerald, respectfully.

"Oh, I don't care about supply and demand and all that d—d nonsense," said Mr. Scobell, somewhat inappropriately. "Theories don't make the loss of money any the pleasanter. And I say to myself, Why should I go on losing money? I never proposed to pay for keeping Hilton Clarke at the Lord Warden hotel. That wasn't spoken of when I started the magazine. What do I gain by it? It isn't even known as my magazine, losing as it is; it's Hilton Clarke's; it's his name that's connected with it in everybody's mouth—that is, when anybody speaks of it. But

they don't. They don't even cut the edges of it at my club. I go into my club, and I ask people about the articles in it; they don't know anything about them. I have mentioned it when I have gone into sassiety; no one has heard of it. What is it to me? What am I paying for? Why, when I wrote a paragraph about a new brand of champagne imported by a particular friend of mine, I couldn't get it printed in my own magazine! I like that! He struck it out without saying a word!"

"Oh no; I struck it out," said Fitzgerald.

"You!" said Mr. Scobell, with an angry glare.

"It was agreed at the very outset that there was to be no private influence like that brought to bear," said Fitzgerald, respectfully but quite coolly. "That kind of thing is fatal to a paper. A single paragraph that the public would suspect would ruin it——"

"How far off ruin is it now?" said the other, scornfully.

"Well," said Fitzgerald, "I did what I thought was right; and I don't want to shirk the responsibility. I know it is what Hilton Clarke would have done; and I was acting for him; and I had no time to ask him first. But if you are dissatisfied with the magazine as a whole," he continued, formally, "or with my share in it, the remedy is simple, as far as I am concerned. You may consider my place vacant from this minute."

He rose. Scobell seemed rather disconcerted for a second; but immediately he said—

"Sit down, Fitzgerald. Wait a moment. I'm not blaming you; you've done your best; you've done all the work; I wish to goodness we had started with you as editor, and saved Hilton Clarke's salary."

"Considering that the idea of the magazine was his"— Fitzgerald tried to interpolate; but the proprietor was bent on mollifying him, and would not be interrupted.

"What's more, though I say it to your face, when I have heard any one in my own circle speak of the magazine at all it has been about those papers of yours. Mrs. Chetwynd spoke to me yesterday. She said she had written to you. Now that's what I like. I like to be connected with something that is spoken of among a good set of people. I

confess to a little weakness that way; I like to be able to say something about the magazine, and hear it approved by the best people. And I said you would be delighted to call."

"I didn't know that was part of my duties," said Fitzgerald, somewhat stiffly.

"What?" replied Mr. Scobell, with a stare.

"To go and call on strangers. Why should I call on Mrs. Chetwynd? I never heard of her."

"God bless my soul, never heard of the Chetwynds!" exclaimed Mr. Scobell. "There are no better known people in London. The very best people are glad to know them. I used to meet Mrs. Chetwynd everywhere in sassiety until her nephew died. Her husband, you must have heard of; why, he was deputy-lieutenant of my own county, before they made him Governor of Tasmania. And she was one of the Cork Barrys; she was delighted to hear you were a countryman of hers. Not know the Chetwynds! But you will be charmed with them, I assure you—I will take you there myself, if you like!"

Not only, however, did Fitzgerald decline this magnanimous offer, but he even hinted that he would much rather not go and call on these strangers. He was not familiar with the ways of London life; he was busily occupied; and so forth. Whereupon Mr. Scobell, who appeared to have promised Mrs. Chetwynd that she should make the acquaintance of the young man, went on a different tack altogether, and appealed to his generosity. It appeared that this poor old lady had recently lost her nephew, in whom her whole life had been bound up. She had adopted him as her son; she had left him in her will everything belonging to her—for his sister, Mary Chetwynd, was already amply provided for; she had made over to him by deed of gift a small property in Cork, on the shores of Bantry Bay. Then a luckless stumble when he was out riding one day in Windsor Park brought an end to all the fair hopes of which he was the centre; and since then the old lady seemed to do nothing but mourn his memory, while keeping up a strange and keen interest in the various pursuits he had followed. She knew all the hunting

appointments; she read accounts of the new breechloaders; she took in the sporting papers. And somehow or other she had got it into her head that these "Confessions of a Young Man" were just such essays as would have been written by this beloved nephew of hers, if he had turned his mind to literature; for they were continually touching on the sports and pastimes that he enjoyed. Was it wonderful that she should wish to see the writer? Was it a great sacrifice for him to give up ten minutes of an afternoon to please an old woman who had suffered much and who was near the grave? The upshot of Mr. Scobell's representations and entreaties was that Fitzgerald agreed to call at the house in Hyde Park Gardens on the following afternoon.

But until then? Well, he had discovered that cocoa-nut with new bread was an excellent thing with which to stave off the pangs of hunger, and he had a few coppers left; while in the evening, on getting down to the Fulham Road, he took the precaution of putting out the light early, and slipping off to bed, so that John Ross should not think he had come home. The worst of it was that this extreme privation produced deplorable fits of sleeplessness; and as the brain seems to take a pleasure in painting the gloomiest possible pictures in the middle of the night, the thing that haunted him chiefly was the prospect of his having to visit a pawnbroker's shop. He thought of the man looking at him; he felt his own self-consciousness tingling in his face; he wondered whether he should be suspected of being a thief. No; he could not do that. He could not go into a pawnbroker's shop. He would go out into the open streets rather, and offer to sell his boots to the first passer-by. Besides (this was the cheering thought that came with the first gray light of the morning) he had still some pence left; and cocoa-nut and bread was not an expensive meal; and who could tell but that Hilton Clarke had at last taken enough trouble to reckon up what was owing to him, and had already sent it off?

About four o'clock the next afternoon, Mr. Scobell called at the office and persuaded Fitzgerald to accompany him to Hyde Park Gardens. In the brougham, as they

were driving up, he endeavoured to impress his companion with a sense of the advantages of getting into good society. It was so important for a young man. True, the Chetwynds did not entertain as they had done before the sad death of the nephew; but good people—people one ought to know—went about the house. Fitzgerald, who rather felt himself in the position of a slave being carried off for exhibition, listened in silence. He had had nothing to eat since breakfast; perhaps it was that circumstance that made the prospect of being introduced to "good people" a somewhat intangible benefit.

However, after all, as it turned out, he was glad he went, for he was quite delighted with this old lady, whom he found propped up in an easy-chair by the side of the tall French window. He forgot all about Mr. Scobell's pompous patronage of him; he ignored his presence altogether, indeed, for he was so charmed with this little dainty white-haired woman, who talked so sweetly, and with a touch of sadness too, and who moreover had just the faintest something in her tone that told him that she too in her youth must have heard the chimes of St. Anne's. Did he know Bantry, she asked. Why, of course he did! And Glengariff? Certainly. Bearhaven? He had only seen that in the distance. Perhaps he had never heard of Boat of Garry?

She seemed to hesitate a little as she mentioned this last place; and as Fitzgerald was replying that he had not heard of it—that, indeed, he did not know much of Bantry Bay—she was silent for a second or so, and he thought there was a little moisture in her eyes, and that her mouth was inclined to be tremulous. But that passed instantly. The pretty little old lady grew quite cheerful again; she said she could see in his writing that he was what the Bantry people called a "great sporter;" and wondered how he could write so much when he seemed to spend all his life out of doors.

"That is all over now," said Fitzgerald. "I've sold myself into slavery."

"And do you find London a lonely place?"

"Yes, rather."

"But you will soon make plenty of friends. Where can Mary be, I wonder."

Just at this moment, as if in answer to her question, the door was opened, and a young lady came into the room and went up and shook hands with Mr. Scobell.

"Mr. Fitzgerald," said the old lady, "let me introduce you to my niece."

As he rose he found before him a tall young woman, who had exceedingly shrewd and clear and yet merry eyes, a fine face, handsome rather than pretty, and with a good deal of decision in it. Altogether the first impression produced on him by this young lady was not entirely sympathetic. He liked gentleness in women. This young person looked as if she could take very good care of herself. However, this first impression was modified when she spoke. She had a soft and musical voice, beautifully modulated; and she talked with a bright cheerfulness and frankness that was pleasant to hear. For one thing, he thought it strange that her dress, which was scrupulously plain and neat, should not be black, seeing that it was for her brother that Mrs. Chetwynd appeared to be still in mourning.

"I suppose auntie has apologised to you, Mr. Fitzgerald," said she, "and I ought to also. You must have thought me terribly intrusive; but I think our friends have spoilt us with their kindness of late; and soon I expect to find auntie printing on her cards of invitation 'Mrs. Chetwynd commands the attendance of So-and-so at five o'clock tea on Tuesday next.' Really they are too kind; and but for that I don't know what my aunt would do, because I have to be so much out of the house at present."

"How you find time for all you have to do, Mary, I can't make out," said the pleasant old lady. "You see, Mr. Fitzgerald, I get blinder and blinder every day, and Mary has to be my eyes for me. But this is the worst of it, that I am a silly old woman, and like to have read to me nice things. Mary is of the younger generation, and cares for nothing but science, and education, and teaching people how many miles it is to the sun, as if there was any chance of their getting there. It is really too hard on her;

and I can scarcely read at all now; and the way she sacrifices her time——"

"It isn't my time that is to be considered at all, Mr. Scobell," said the young lady, brightly, "but you have no idea what my aunt will insist on my reading to her. Pretty stories, and poems of the affections; I do believe nothing would please her so much as a whole column of the sentimental verses—breaking hearts and the rest of it—that the local poets send to the country newspapers."

"But aren't these interesting enough?" said Fitzgerald; perhaps conscious that he himself had appeared frequently in that quarter.

"They are a little monotonous, are they not?" said the young lady of the clear eyes, regarding him with something like scrutiny. "A little too much of love and dove, and posies and roses?"

"At all events they are human nature," said he—with some slight flush in his face. "If they are not merely literary imitations—if they are the real expression of the hopes or fancies or feelings of the writers, I cannot imagine anything more interesting. It is a human life laid bare; and that to me is more interesting than a frog's foot or the question whether there is bismuth in the moon."

She regarded him for a moment curiously. Then she rose.

"You will excuse me, Mr. Scobell; I have to get to Whitechapel by half-past five. Good-bye, auntie dear!"

She kissed her aunt; she bowed to Fitzgerald; and left the room. Fitzgerald, without knowing why, experienced a sense of relief.

How pretty this dear little old lady looked sitting in state there, with the glow of the afternoon lending a faint colour to the somewhat worn and sad face. Fitzgerald thought he had never seen such silvery hair. And she seemed pleased to have visitors; she prattled away about the things of the hour, and what this or that distinguished person was doing; and all through, by a chance remark here or there, she would remind Fitzgerald that she was his countrywoman. And when they rose to leave, she made a direct appeal to Master Willie to come and see her again

whenever he had an idle half-hour; for she was an inquisitive old woman, she said; and she could not read; and she liked to know what was going on.

When they got outside Fitzgerald's admiration broke forth.

"Well, that is a most delightful old lady!" he exclaimed. "It is simply delightful to hear her talk. And she seems to have known everybody worth knowing for the last sixty years."

"Yes," said Mr. Scobell, in his lofty manner, as the footman opened the door of his brougham for him. "Yes. They are a good sort of people, the Chetwynds. They are very well known in sassiety. I have a few more calls to make; ta, ta!"

So Fitzgerald set out to walk home. He had had some tea and a piece of cake; and that was cheering; in fact, it had raised his spirits so much that he now resolved that, if John Ross were at home, he would frankly ask him for a share of his supper that evening; and he knew pretty well that Ross would be as glad to give it as he to get it. It was not, however, his supper that chiefly occupied his thoughts as he walked down to the Fulham Road. More than once he kept thinking of Mary Chetwynd, and of her manner towards him, and of what that could possibly be that called her to Whitechapel.

CHAPTER XI.

A DISCLOSURE.

QUITE clearly matters were approaching a climax. Notwithstanding all his shifts and devices, Fitzgerald was at length forced to accept a loan of a few pounds from his neighbour below; and he at the same time sent an urgent note to Hilton Clarke representing how his affairs stood. Of course, he never doubted but that that appeal would be instantly answered.

Days passed; there were no tidings of any sort. Finally, two letters that had been forwarded to the Lord Warden hotel were returned through the Post Office, with the intimation that Mr. Hilton Clarke had gone away and left no address.

Fitzgerald, very much aghast, took these letters to Mr. Silas Earp. The heavy black-a-vised manager regarded them in his usually lugubrious way, and merely observed—

"A very good job if we hear no more about him. He was only drawing his salary, and doing no work."

"But," said Fitzgerald, who was rather bewildered, "but he owes me my salary. I have never had anything since the magazine was started, except £10!"

"That's a pity," said the other, slowly. "I always heard he was fishy about money matters—and other matters, too."

"I don't know what you mean!" said Fitzgerald, quickly. "Of course he'll pay me. I don't doubt that. But it's too bad of him to be so careless——"

"I expect he has spent all the money by this time.

Wish I had known; I'd have told you not to have Hilton Clarke in your debt to the tune of twopence. It's a pity; I don't expect you'll ever see a farthing of it."

"You don't mean to say that you accuse him of stealing my salary?" said Fitzgerald—but his resentment against this implication was accompanied by a wild guess at what his own situation would be if it were true.

"Oh no, I don't say that," said the manager, regarding him. "I wouldn't call it that. He wouldn't look at it in that light. But you ought to know Hilton Clarke better than I do. I only know of him by report; and I know I wouldn't lend him a sovereign I couldn't afford to lose."

Fitzgerald went back to his own room, and sate down. It was not only the loss of the money—supposing this thing were true—that troubled him. He could replace that loss in time. But to think that this friend of his, who had seemed so kind and considerate, who had such delicate perceptions and sympathies in literary matters, could act like a common, vulgar scoundrel, and that in a peculiarly callous fashion, this it was that crushed him. But only for a few seconds. He refused to believe such a thing. He was ashamed of himself for having deemed it possible. He went back to Mr. Silas Earp, and told him that he need not mention to any one the fact of Hilton Clarke's being pecuniarily indebted to him, Fitzgerald, for of course the matter would be put straight. The lugubrious manager regarded him, as if with a little sad curiosity, and only said "Very well."

The next few days were days of deep suspense to Fitzgerald, for he knew not what to think of this persistent silence. When the explanation came, it was short and decisive. One morning he went into the office as usual. Mr. Silas Earp met him.

"The fat's in the fire now," said the manager, calmly. "Mr. Scobell has been here this morning. A mad bull is a fool to him."

"What is the matter then?"

"The story got all over London last night, he says. And the magazine is to be stopped this week. There is the announcement."

He handed the stupefied assistant-editor a printed slip with these words underlined in writing—"We have to announce to our readers this week that the publication of the *Household Magazine* ceases with the present number."

"But what is it all about? What is the story?"

"Well, I only got bits, he was in such a rage," said the manager. "It's all about Lady Ipswich, I believe; and when her brother found her at last at Geneva, with Hilton Clarke, she wouldn't come back, not a bit. She says Sir John can sue for a divorce if he likes."

Fitzgerald was staggered, but only for a moment.

"And even if the story is true," he cried, "what has that to do with the magazine? Why stop the magazine on account of it? We never advised our readers to run away with other people's wives; it has nothing to do with the magazine!"

"Oh, but Mr. Scobell wants to smash something or somebody," the manager said, calmly. "His wife is furious; Lady Ipswich was a friend of hers. And then there's money; Mr. Scobell thinks Hilton Clarke only started this magazine to get money out of him——"

"Oh, that's nonsense!" said Fitzgerald, warmly. "That is quite preposterous. Hilton Clarke may be this or that, but he is not a deliberate swindler. He wouldn't take the trouble. He is too self-indulgent. And then if you go and stop the magazine now, you make an association between it and this scandal that doesn't exist. You draw attention to it. You ask people to believe——"

But at this moment Mr. Scobell himself made his appearance; and an angry man he was. It was in vain that Fitzgerald pointed out to him that to stop the magazine that very week would be the very thing to make the public believe there was some connection between it and what had happened. "Sassiety," Mr. Scobell declared, was talking of nothing but this scandal; and here was Hilton Clarke's name outside the periodical that he owned; a nice thing to have the editor of your own paper run away with the wife of one of your own friends, and lead everybody to believe that you had introduced them. He would have no more of this. He had lost enough money, without having to

incur scandal as well. No doubt it was a fine thing for literary men to have a paper go on for ever——

"But what do you mean by that?" said Fitzgerald, with a sharpness that brought Mr. Scobell to his senses. "If you are tired of the magazine, and have no faith in it, drop it when you like; I was only anxious you should not associate it with a merely personal scandal. But you needn't talk as if it had been a fine thing for me. For all my work on it I have received £10; I should have made more at sweeping a crossing."

Mr. Scobell was bewildered; but when the circumstances were explained to him, he not only exempted Fitzgerald from the vague charge he had brought against literary persons generally, but said he had been infamously treated, and that as he might suffer from the sudden cessation of the magazine some compensation was due to him.

"It was plunder—a deliberate scheme for plunder," he maintained. "And he has done you as he has done me. It isn't more than three weeks since he got an extra £100 from me; it was a deliberate swindle. He never cared about the magazine; he never worked for it; it was a scheme to get money——"

"It was nothing of the kind, Mr. Scobell," said Fitzgerald, bluntly. "I know what he thought of the magazine. I talked enough with him about it. He expected it to be a great property; and that, as he had presented you with the idea, he ought to have a liberal salary and not too much work. He is a self-indulgent man; he can deny himself nothing. If you and I have lost this money, you can afford to lose it better than I can; but there's no use in making wild charges. It was not a scheme to defraud; that is absurd. I think he was very soon disappointed; he didn't care to work after that. And then it was a pity the money should all have been placed in his hands; he always seemed to think he had a right to everything within his reach. And then I suppose this opportunity—this temptation—was too much for him, don't you see——"

"Well, you take it pretty quietly," said Scobell, almost with a touch of indignation, "seeing you must have lost £60 or £70 through him."

"It wasn't altogether that I was thinking of," said Fitzgerald. "I liked him."

Mr. Scobell adhered to his determination to stop the magazine; but he sent Fitzgerald a solatium in the shape of a cheque for £25. Thus it was that Fitzgerald found himself with about four or five months' pretty hard work thrown away, with much less money in his pocket than he had come to London with, and without that friend on whose occasional word of sympathy or advice he had counted. But he was not much dismayed, after all. Other people had come to London and fared worse. He saw lots of things he thought he could do—driving a hansom, if it came to that. If his literary adventures had so far been unsuccessful, he had all the more material in his desk for use when the opportunity arrived. He was free from debt, for he had taken instant care to repay John Ross; he could live on little; he had the hope and courage of three-and-twenty; and when he wanted relief from the cares and troubles of the world he had the faculty of entirely losing himself in a play or a poem, so that it was of little consequence to him whether the night was cold, or whether there was supper in his room or not. Besides, was he not the most fortunate of mortals in the possession of Kitty? How could a man be unhappy who had one true heart continually thinking of him, and cheering him with messages of trust and love and confidence?

"MY BRAVE BOY," Kitty wrote, on hearing of the catastrophe,—"I'm very glad. It will open your eyes. It's worth the money. Why, you'll never get on at all if you believe in everybody like that; and if you don't get on, what's to become of me? I saw through that whited sepulchre of a wretch; if I had him here just now I'd let him know what I've been thinking of him. And even now you seem disposed to make excuses for him. Perhaps when one person takes money—and cruelly and meanly takes money—that belongs to another person, he isn't called a thief *among gentlemen*. That wouldn't be refined, perhaps? Now, dear Willie, once for all, it won't do for you to go on like that. All your geese are swans (including me). You have too much

poetry about you; and you are too willing to believe in people; and you were made too much of about Inisheen. If you keep all your poetry for me, and make me wonderful and glorious, that's quite right—for that is just the sort of person I am; but you'll have to give up painting fancy portraits of other people. I am younger than you; but I've seen a good lot. But do you think I want my bonny Coulin to be hard-hearted? No, I don't. I want him to keep all his poetry and imagination for me; and not to believe in anybody else—further than he can see them; and then when he has made his way in the world and fought people on their own terms, then he can settle down and let his children make a fool of him to their hearts' content.

"Willie, there's a man in Dublin bothering me with his bouquets again; but I don't allow them to be sent up, even when he manages to get them left, and I haven't even looked at his card. I go to Belfast on the 13th. My father can't imagine why I don't go to England; but must I not remain faithful to my boy's wishes? Dear Willie, I have read the verses a hundred times over that you sent me with the bracelet on my birthday; but why are they so sad? I like particularly that one that ends—

> 'O aching heart, that sinks or swells
> Whene'er at night you hear the sound
> So far away of Shandon Bells!'

But are you so very lonely then; and only making believe to be comfortable and happy when you write to me? Really, when I see the people who haven't an ounce or an atom of your genius driving past in their fine carriages, I have no patience. And they come to the concert and sit in the stalls with their diamonds and opera-cloaks; and the young men so spick and span. Things are not right. What can *they* do? Can they do anything but drive in the Phœnix—the Phaynix I suppose they'd call it. Yes, and I wonder how long we may have to go on this way—everything unsettled, and a long distance between us. And now you have to begin all over again, thanks to your fine friend. But if you're not afraid, no more am I, and

we'll snap our fingers at them yet, and when everything's quite fair and clear, and money all right, then you'll publish a whole volume of poems telling the country all about me and my wonderfulness (I am wonderful, I can tell you; when I think of the way I bear up against your being so far away from me, I am lost in admiration of myself). That reminds me that I have made a conundrum. This is it—'*Why should my Coulin be the happiest man in England?*' Now you may twist this about any way, and you may pull it to pieces, and put it together again, and turn it upside down and round about half-a-dozen times over, and yet you would never find out the answer. I say *you* wouldn't, anybody else in the world would see it in a moment. It's '*Because I'm in love with him.*' I think this is very good; keep it a secret.

"Your obliged and humble servant,

"KITTY."

London did not feel quite so lonely that evening. There was to be an Irish-ballad concert in St. James's Hall at eight o'clock, and this letter had put him into such a cheerful frame of mind that he thought he would go away up there and get some cheap place; and then, sitting all by himself, and not being obliged to talk to any one, he would be able to hear if any of them could sing the Irish songs like Kitty.

CHAPTER XII.

A GO-BETWEEN.

Two days after the public announcement had been made that there was to be no more of the *Household Magazine*, Fitzgerald was sitting in that solitary room of his, alone. The morning was crisp and clear; there was a wintry feeling in the air; the sunlight falling into the little court-yard was cheerful enough, even if the small plane-trees had lost their leaves. But it was not of the Fulham Road he was thinking, now that he had put away from him the sheet of paper on the table. This first touch of the winter had awakened dreams. Now the picture before his absent eyes was Kenvane Head; the blue sea all murmuring; the vast caves silent and mysterious; his only companion a sagacious, quick-eyed spaniel, lying with his nose between his paws, and yet evidently not understanding why his master should thus be content to sit and muse, instead of being up and after the wild-fowl. Again it was a wild moorland on a bitter cold night; Andy the Hopper and he each cramped up in a barrel sunk into the bog; both breathlessly waiting for the sudden whirr overhead of the duck. Or rather was it not of that wonderful day when Miss Romayne first condescended to go out into the open light of the streets with him; his consciousness that all Cork was looking at and admiring her; the delight of recommending a particular seat on board the steamer; the sail past the golden autumn woods, and the broad shallows of the river, out into the great, shining, windy Harbour, with its glancing waves, and white yachts, and islands; her

admiration of a pretty bareheaded lass at Aghadoe, whose hair seemed to have been bleached by the sea-air and the sunlight into different shades of golden-brown, and Kitty's timid remark that she thought his hair was like that (followed by a quick blush, for their acquaintanceship at that time did not quite justify personal criticism); and then, finally, his faithful escort of her home in the evening, Miss Patience most happily being confined to her house with neuralgia? Or was it of that other day when, at a later period of their intimacy, he had inveigled her away into a boat with him; the Atlantic calm and blue; Kitty getting her first lessons in rowing, and pulling away so bravely that by-and-by it was discovered that her poor little white hands had become quite rosy-red inside; then fishing off the deep shelving rocks; her shriek of delight when she felt a tug; her shriek of fear when he hauled in for her a gasping and flopping gurnard; their luncheon on the beach, and the wonder of having Kitty wait on him and offer him things; then the long row home, Kitty lying snugly in the stern, and chatting or laughing or singing as the mood overtook her, the while the westering sun sank slowly towards the horizon, and the heavens became a blaze of green, and gold, and crimson fire, and the clear star of the lighthouse, high up there on the cliff, shone out to sea? On this wintry morning his thoughts and dreams were far away indeed from the Fulham Road.

There was a step on the stair outside.

"John Ross come back from Cookham," he thought.

But when, in answer to a sharp knock, he went and opened the door, it was not the Scotch artist but Mr. Scobell he found before him—Mr. Scobell looking very smart indeed with his glazed boots, his dog-skin gloves, and cane.

"How are you, Fitzgerald?" said he, and as he entered the big, bare room he looked curiously around, for this was his first visit. "Hope you're not busy. Glad to find you at home. So this is your bunk, is it? Hum, you're not so well housed as Hilton Clarke was in the Albany. Perhaps that is because you live on your own money and not on some one else's."

"I don't think there's any use in going back on that," said Fitzgerald, uneasily.

"Oh, you take it very quietly—very quietly. Quite right to stick up for your friend, though; if you look at it in that way. That's not quite how I see it."

He sat down; stretched out his legs; and tapped the tip of his boot with his cane.

"The fact is," said he, calmly, "I have been trying these last two or three days to find out how I came to be such a fool as to go into anything that Hilton Clarke proposed. But he is a devilish plausible fellow; devilish plausible. There's a sort of infernal superior air about him that imposes on people; you can't imagine he'd swindle you——"

"I don't think we need talk about it; for we shan't agree about it," said Fitzgerald, bluntly.

"Well, he has made me dance to a pretty tune. Do you know how much he has got out of me altogether?"

"You appear to forget," said Fitzgerald, somewhat angrily, "that you went into that scheme entirely as a business matter. It looked promising enough. You had your eyes open. I suppose if it had been successful; if it had made money, and been socially a success, there would not have been any talking about swindling——"

"Very well, very well," said Mr. Scobell, good-naturedly, "we will not talk about it. I consider you have more right to complain than I have. But I did not come here to talk about Clarke. I came here to talk about you."

He glanced round the apartment; then at the small table, with its bottle of ink and big sheets of paper.

"I suppose now," said he, with an abstracted dreamy air, as if he was talking of something a long way off, "I suppose now it isn't very easy to get on in literature in London?"

"I find it difficult enough; in fact I can't get on at all," said Fitzgerald; and then he added, with a kind of rueful smile: "However, I have not quite despaired yet. I am trying to find out whether it is my work that is bad, or whether it is that the newspapers and magazines are over-manned; or there is this possibility—that my work may not be so very bad, and yet just miss something that

makes it practicable and suitable. Well, I hope to find out in time—and the sooner the better for me."

"Yes, no doubt," observed Mr. Scobell, again assuming that contemplative air. "You have applied to the *Times*, I suppose?"

"No; I imagine every one applies to the *Times*," Fitzgerald said. "And then there is a great drawback; I don't know shorthand——"

"You can learn——"

"I ought to have learnt it long ago. It takes a terrible time, and constant practice, they say, before you are worth anything to a newspaper. I ought to have learnt it while I had a fixed situation in Cork. That was my chance. Well, I lost my chance, partly, I suppose, because I had ambitions beyond newspaper work, and partly because I could get too easily down to my native place, where there was always a gun or a rod. Now I am paying the penalty; for the newspapers don't seem to want my fine literature, and I can't offer them good reporting."

"My dear f'lah," said Mr. Scobell, regarding him with an air of the most magnificent patronage, "I am delighted to hear you talk so sensibly—delighted! Sooner or later the public will listen to you. They will discover that you can recognise facts. But in the meantime," added this artful diplomatist, with somewhat greater caution, "in the meantime, you see, you must make the best of it——"

"No doubt——"

"But wait a moment. When I see you in such a reasonable and sensible way of thinking, I don't think I can do better than put before you a proposal—a suggestion—that was made to me yesterday by Mrs. Chetwynd. Now she is also a person of common sense. She is practical, and she is also sympathetic. When she saw the announcement that our magazine had stopped, it occurred to her that you might have a little more time on your hands; and she sent for me at once."

"Yes?" said Fitzgerald; though he did not quite see what literary employment he could obtain from Mrs. Chetwynd.

"To make a long story short—for we had a considerable

talk about you—the sum and substance of her suggestion is this: that, if you had time to spare from your general literary work, it might be worth your while to accept some additional occupation which, with no great trouble, might —ah—might, in fact, increase your income."

"I would gladly," said Fitzgerald, without hesitation. "But it sounds rather—rather vague, doesn't it?"

"Oh no. She had a distinct proposal. If you will read to her for an hour each day, she would give you a certain salary—small, you know—but then, an addition, as I suggested—in short, one hundred pounds a year."

"To read to her?" said Fitzgerald, with a sudden flush on his forehead. "Isn't that more like the occupation of a waiting-maid?"

"Oh no, certainly not," said Mr. Scobell, with an eagerness which showed that he had been looking forward to this objection. "Not at all, I assure you. That is just the mistake you make. What Mrs. Chetwynd must have first of all is an intelligent and cultivated reader, who knows about politics and literature and what's going on. Very good people go to her house—the best, indeed; and she wants to know what is going on. Very well; the poor old lady is nearly blind; she can't read; what more natural than that she should say to herself, 'Well, now, if I can find an intelligent young literary man who could spare me an hour or so, he could pick out just such things as are important, and I should have the advantage of his judgment in literary matters, and it might be some little help to him.' She is a very kindly and thoughtful old lady, let me tell you, Fitzgerald; and before rejecting her offer at once, you ought to think over it——"

"Oh, I am very much obliged to her, and to you also," said Fitzgerald, who was obviously hesitating. "And any sort of settled income I should be glad to have. But—but if all this is needed, who has been reading to her hitherto?"

"Why, she told you, don't you remember?" said Mr. Scobell, who perceived that he was likely to be successful in his commission. "Her niece. But then Miss Chetwynd's personal occupations seem to take up more and

more of her time. You have no idea what that girl has on her hands. And so sharp she is—as sharp as a needle; by Jove, she caught me yesterday afternoon as clean as ever you saw! I said to her, 'Well, now, Miss Chetwynd, I hear a great deal of this Society of yours, and of what you are doing in the East-end.' 'Oh yes,' she says, 'people talk of what a few of us are trying to do, and they think it heroic and interesting and all that, whereas it is quite prosaic and simple; but what they won't do is to bother themselves to give us the least help.' Well, don't you know, my dear f'lah, this was rather a poser; so I said to her—there were some distinguished people in the room, mind you, Professor ——, and Professor ——, and Canon ——, and a lot more—and I said to her that I wasn't afraid to go down to Shoreditch or Shadwell or whatever the blessed place was, and lend a helping hand now and again. I have plenty of time; I have a little spare cash now and then; I thought it was natural enough. No; she wouldn't hear of it; I knew nothing about the people; indiscreet charity was the worst enemy they had; and so on. 'Well,' I said to her, like an ass as I was, 'you must be very confident, when you refuse help in that way.' 'Oh, but I don't,' she says as sharp as a needle. 'If you really wish to help us, you can do so; you can buy us three hundred filters; we are very badly in want of them.' Three hundred filters! And then Professor —— laughed, as if it was a great joke; but I can tell you I wasn't going to be jumped upon by a jackass-headed old idiot like that, so I said, just as I might be talking to you, 'Of course you shall have them, Miss Chetwynd.' And now the mischief is I haven't the slightest notion what they'll cost—five shillings, half a sovereign, a couple of guineas——"

"Oh, they are not so dear as that," said Fitzgerald. "That one over there is a very good little filter, and it only cost me half-a-crown."

"Half-a-crown. Thirty-seven pounds ten. Well, if it had been a hundred and thirty-seven pounds ten I declare I'd have paid it to take the wind out of the sails of that lantern-jawed old Behemoth. But about this matter of the reading, Fitzgerald. I did not undertake that you would

accept; but I said I would try to persuade you. A hundred a year isn't much——"

"It is a great deal to me," said Fitzgerald, frankly.

"Very well. What is an hour's time a day? And there's more than that. The very best people in London go to that house. A young man ought to see sassiety. I think it is a great chance——"

"Oh, but I can't go at all if I am to see any one!" exclaimed Fitzgerald, in great dismay. "I did not understand that at all——"

"Of course you won't see them while you're there on duty—of course not. But surely you understand. This old lady is interested in you. She is a countrywoman of yours. Something in your manner, or accent, or something in your writing, reminds her of her nephew, who was just the whole world to her. And of course you will be recognised as a friendly visitor, not as a slave. You may meet people; my dear f'lah, it is a great chance for you! It is one of the very best houses in London; and it is not exclusive—Cabinet ministers, men of science, poets, painters, all sorts, as well as the best known members of the fashionable world. There is no house in London is more highly spoken of. My dear f'lah, you must be mad if you think twice!"

"Well, I won't think twice."

"That's right. And I said if you accepted you would call on her this evening at six: all the visitors will have gone by that time."

Accordingly, that evening, Fitzgerald called at the house in Hyde Park Gardens; and was immediately admitted and shown up to the drawing-room. Instead, however, of finding Mrs. Chetwynd there, he found her niece, who was seated at a table apparently engaged in painting, and who rose as he entered. He was disturbed and vexed, he knew not why. He did not like meeting those clear and penetrating eyes, though indeed they were pretty eyes, and had some touch of friendliness in them as she spoke to him and said she would go and fetch her aunt. It seemed to him that he was taking over a woman's work; while she herself was addressing herself to the harder outside realities

of the world. That was not a pleasant thought—especially if it had also occurred to her. He was somewhat relieved when the tall clear-eyed young lady, whose natural grace of manner somewhat softened the serious simplicity and dignity of her face and figure, left the room. Nay, he rejoiced to think that he had caught her painting. That was something pretty and feminine. As there was a complete silence outside the door he ventured to approach the table where she had been seated, to get a glimpse of her work. And then he found that instead of colouring Christmas cards, or finishing up a little bit of imaginary landscape, she had been engaged in copying on to a magic-lantern slide, from a scientific book lying open there, the appearance of a magnified drop of impure water, with the most ghastly creatures squirming about within the charmed circle. He had just time to retreat a step or two when aunt and niece entered.

The little old lady received him in the most gracious way, and begged him to be seated, while her niece was making her comfortable in an easy-chair by the fire. That accomplished, Miss Chetwynd took up her painting materials and disappeared.

"I hope I have not disturbed your niece," said Fitzgerald, anxiously, "by calling at this hour."

"Oh dear no!" the old lady said, warming her mittened hands at the fire. "Oh dear no. I daresay she is off to her magic-lantern now. She means to frighten some of her poor people into using filters; and your friend Mr. Scobell, by the way, is going to get her the filters. She is a very good girl, is Mary; and very industrious; I only hope she won't catch some dreadful fever in those places. But don't talk to her, Mr. Fitzgerald, if you please, about her work. She says there is too much talk. Oh, by the way, perhaps I am going too fast in assuming that you are going to take pity on a poor old blind woman, and let her know what's going on?"

"If I can," said he, "but I scarcely know——"

"Oh, but you shall have absolute liberty," she said, blithely. "You shall order any books or newspapers that you like yourself; and I am looking forward to such a

treat; for I have had to live for so long on the dry bones of science! You know, Mr. Fitzgerald, Mary is the best of girls; but she can't help thinking that I am interested in what interests her; and really, as you said so cleverly the other day, one gets weary of the frog's foot and would prefer a little human nature. And Mary laughs at me for a silly old woman when I have listened most patiently to her Post-Office Savings Banks scheme, and her plan for ventilating sick-rooms, and all about her hospital-nurses, and when I say to her, 'Mary, dear, just to go in to dinner with a pleasanter taste in the mouth, won't you read me a chapter of *Consuelo*?' And really it is wonderful what that girl gets through in a day; learning herself and teaching other people; and afraid of no amount of trouble or disappointment. Oh yes; and I can see that her reading is not thrown away: for sometimes, when the scientifics, as I call them, are here, though she does not say much, you can hear that she has just hit the point in dispute; and they are all very kind to her, I'm sure. Now, Mr. Fitzgerald, I am so glad that this has been arranged; and I hope we shall try to make it not very irksome to you. What hour would suit you best?"

"But that is for you, Mrs. Chetwynd, to say," answered the young man. "Any hour, indeed, would suit me; for I have no definite occupation at the moment, since the *Household Magazine* was stopped."

"A quarter to six in the evening would suit me very well, then," said the old lady. "For at this time of the year we keep open table—a quarter to seven *table d'hôte* in fact, without any ceremony, and anybody who likes can drop in, and then be off to their lectures and what not. That is very useful for Mary; she sees everybody; and has not got to sacrifice the whole evening. Well, you see, Mr. Fitzgerald, if you could make it convenient to call at a quarter to six, and spend an hour with the newspapers or new books, I should go in to meet my friends quite coached up, and then I shouldn't have to ask them whether Queen Anne was dead or not. And I know you'll have pity on me, Mr. Fitzgerald; and not choose books that are too dreadfully learned. We will leave the bismuth in the

moon alone, even if you have to read me the broken-hearted poems in the provincial newspapers."

And so, with a very pretty little laugh, and an appointment for the very next evening, this interview was concluded; and Fitzgerald, as he walked away down through the gas-lit streets to Fulham, was thinking that this time there could be no mistake, that this time he could definitely assure Kitty that he was in possession of a settled income, however small. And there were other things that occurred to him. He could not help regarding it as one of the oddest possible results of the conditions of modern society that he, a man, should have been constituted, as it were, the champion of sentiment as against science, and that his antagonist, the champion of science, should prove to be a young lady of very considerable personal attractions. The situation seemed to him novel; and he kept wondering what Mary Chetwynd thought of it, if, indeed, she had time to think of such trivial things at all.

CHAPTER XIII.

NEIGHBOURS.

To be a man of letters in London!—how many young people, in remote corners of the country, are at this present moment thinking that there can be nothing finer than that, and perhaps secretly wondering whether they might not risk the venture and try to make such a career their own. When Fitzgerald resolved to quit the security of that provincial newspaper-office and try his fortune in the great capital, he was fairly equipped for the enterprise. His education, if not extensive, had been thorough as far as it went; he was well read; he had taken immense pains in mastering a certain simplicity of style; he was familiar with many subjects and ways of life that the ordinary writer, mostly a dweller in towns, knows very little about; he had youth, health, and a frank face; and his heart was fired with love, which was likely to add a little touch of poetical glamour to his productions. But his experiences fell far short of his buoyant hopes. His ignorance of shorthand barred the familiar gateway of the newspapers. Then he found that those magazines which were the most ready to accept his contributions were the least prompt in paying for them. Moreover, he had sadly to confess to himself that those contributions which he could get accepted were not literature at all. They were mere manufacture—compilations in the British Museum. At first he had aimed at something higher. Disregarding Hilton Clarke's disparagement of criticism, he had made some careful studies of one or two of the pre-Shakspearian dramatists: no editor would

look at them. Then he tried essays on social and domestic subjects; but every avenue seemed to be blocked. Occasionally he had the satisfaction of finding a bit of translation from Catullus or Horace accepted; though he rightly judged that magazine editors looked on such things as handy for filling up half a page. No, there was no help for it; he might cultivate the higher literature for his own satisfaction, but if he wanted to supplement that one hundred pounds a year he was now in receipt of, and so be able to write hopeful letters to Kitty, what he had to sit down and compose was a useful little paper on "The Successive Discoveries of Kaolin," or "The Origin of the English Race horse," or some such practical subject. It was not literature; but it brought Kitty a little nearer.

John Ross was doing him a mischief. It was all very well for the Scotch artist to take this young companion of his about with him, and give him a new pair of eyes, and colour up the world for him; but unconsciously to himself Fitzgerald was adopting in his own work Ross's way of looking at things. Ross was purely and simply an impressionist; a vivid suggestion was what he aimed at, careless of subsequent detail or even precise accuracy of form. And it was so delightful to Fitzgerald to walk abroad with this man, and see the commonest things in the world intensified with a new interest, that he insensibly yielded to the fascination and forgot that he was a writer and not a painter. The objects of life became to him so many pieces of colour; when he looked at a long terrace of buildings shining clear on a summer's day, it was not to guess at the rent of the houses, or wonder whether they were well drained, or whether there were any sick people there unable to come out into the sunlight, but to observe that the warm brilliant mass of yellow made the blue above more intense. If the life of a man of letters in London, so far as he had experience of it, was disappointing and prosaic, these occasional walks with his artist companion brought back some poetry into the world. "*Anch' io son pittore*," he might have said, so wonderfully did his faculty of observation develop under this rough-and-ready,

quarrelsome, enthusiastic tutelage; but he was much too wise to attempt anything with the brush.

"Man," said John Ross to him one day, as they were walking out in the suburbs, "what a grand thing it must be to be like you!"

"Oh, indeed?" said Master Willie, whose fortunes did not seem to himself to be so flourishing.

"Ay, just to be able to look at the things that nature puts before ye, and never to have a thocht o' how ye're going to make money out o' them. What wouldna I give to be a laddie again, just for an hour, and lie down on a warm bank in the sun, and watch the clear waters of the burnie twirlin' round the stanes, and the speedwells on the banks, and the red rowans on the trees, and everything like that, and just to let your eyes drink it in without even thinking of the infernal pent-box. Man, it's a terrible thing to have to go through the world just conteenually warslin wi' tubes o' colours. There's no two things that I see thegither that I havena to take the balance of; it's a disease; confound it, it's a disease; I'm a man; why shouldna I be allowed to go through the world and look at it like another man? It's a pent-box that's the millstone round my neck. Why should I care about they palings?" he said, as they were passing a cabbage garden. "I'm not going to pent them! What is it to me what colour they are!"

"Well, that can't bother you anyway," said Fitzgerald, with a laugh, "for they haven't any colour."

"Dinna be so sure about that, laddie," said the other. "Ye think they're gray, I suppose."

"Well, aren't they?"

"Oh ay. No doubt, if ye took a bit o' the wood in your hand, ye would find it gray and colourless enough. But just you try to fix your eyes on the wooden paling and on the violent greens o' the cabbages at the same time. Is the wood quite so gray?"

"No," Fitzgerald had to admit. "Not quite so gray. In fact, rather lilac, isn't it? In fact, it is quite a pinkish lilac, if you look at the two together."

"Ay, and that's what ye've got to paint, my laddie.

But if people 'll no buy my pictures of Cookham, they're no likely to buy a picture of a cabbage gairden in Chelsea."

"But after all, Ross," said his companion, "writing people are just as badly off as painting people; for they have to keep watching and watching——".

"But they havena to warsle wi' pigments, man!" the other said, impatiently. "When ye see a thing is yellow, ye say it's yellow, and there's an end; but the painter has got to get that particular quality out o' an infernal tin tube, and even then put it into all sorts o' relations with the things round it. I wish to heaven I had been brought up a painter of shop-doors and shutters, and I could have had my own way wi' fine colour and naething stepping in to spoil it."

"It's all nonsense your complaining like that," Fitzgerald said finally. "Instead of complaining, you ought to be thankful. The difference between you and other people is that you have trained yourself to see more. You see beautiful things at every turn, where they see nothing. Is there any advantage in being partially blind?"

Had John Ross kept more closely to his studio in the Fulham Road no doubt Fitzgerald's life at this time would have been a pleasanter one. But he was much away, especially when he had got a few pounds for a sketch, and his neighbour, up there in the solitary room, felt the winter nights to be long and dark. The hour spent in reading and talking to Mrs. Chetwynd was the bright spot of the day; when he returned to his lonely lodgings and this almost hopeless manufacture of articles in which he took nothing but the most perfunctory interest, sometimes the world seemed to weigh heavily on him. But curiously enough, it was always at such moments, when circumstances seemed to hem him in, when the battle of life appeared to be going against him, when the future seemed growing dark indeed, that his imagination broke through these toils and carried him into a sphere of creation where his work was a joy to him. No matter how insignificant the result might be, it was the expression of something within him that he himself could not well understand; it was not of the slightest consequence to him what editors might think of it. One

night, for example, he was labouring away at an article on "Some particulars of the Earthquake at Lisbon." He had been for two days at the British Museum; and he had copious notes before him. He was trying to make the picture as graphic as he could; but it was distressing work; and he did not even know where to send it when he had it finished. Suddenly he heard a slight hissing sound in the fire—like that produced by rain falling down the short chimney. But he could hear no sound of rain on the slates. He went to the window; there was an absolute silence; but there were dark streaks crossing the orange glow of the lamp in the courtyard. He opened the window, and put out his hand: it was stung by the sharp, moist touch of snow. And then what must he needs do but hastily put on his cap, and issue out into the dark to feel this soft thing blowing all about him—touching his lips, his eyelashes, his hands—this soft, silent thing that made a wonder of the lonely streets. He wandered on and on in a sort of ecstasy; voices seemed calling to him from the past: he knew not whether to laugh or cry. His blood tingled with joy at the presence of this new, strange thing; and yet there was a kind of despair as if he yearned for some one far away; and there was a doom portending; an agony of love and terror and appeal. Then a phrase here or there; and it was a lover who spoke; and the voice of the sea could be heard now, in the awful caves. Quite blindly, like one in a dream, and not heeding the snow, he made his way back from the dark lanes to his room, and almost mechanically he sate down to his writing-table. He saw something before him not the least like what he had seen outside. It was more like the sea; and darkness; and the wild Irish coast. And with an impatient cast here and there for a rhyme, and all trembling, and even scarcely knowing quite the value of the phrases he was using, he put down on paper what seemed to him the voice of some one else, that he could hear far off in the night—

The wild March winds are blowing;
The trees are dark; the skies are gray;
O love, let us be going—
The evening gathers: far the way.

O do you hear the thunder
On Daramona's rocky isle—
The wild seas sweeping under
The ghostly cliffs of black Glengyle?

He rose, with a quick kind of sigh; pushed the paper away, and began mechanically to knock the snow from his sleeves and his coat. Then he went to the fire; and lit a pipe; and stared into the red coals as if he expected to see more pictures there. And then, after a time, he went back to the table; and took up the bit of paper; and calmly and critically regarded what he had written.

"Yes," he said to himself. "That's it. That's true. I will keep that for myself. There isn't an editor in London would give me twopence for it anyway; and the public would ask where the story was; but it has got to stand just as it is; it is a bit of my personal property for Kitty to inherit when she becomes a widow."

Just as he was putting away the bit of paper into a desk which contained a very considerable quantity of similarly useless scraps, a noise was heard below; and Fitzgerald's heart jumped up at the notion that perhaps John Ross had come back from Sonning, where he had been for a fortnight. There was a ready means of ascertaining. He took the poker and knocked twice on the floor. In response, there were three knocks on the roof of the studio. Then Fitzgerald made his way down the slippery steps; and caught Ross as he was in the act of lighting the stove.

"No, no; let that alone," he cried. "I've got a blazing fire in my bunk. Come along up. Man, I've got some sheep's tongues that'll make your mouth water; and a yard of French bread; only you must bring some whisky with you. Come along; I want to hear all about Sonning, and I won't ask you to show me your sketches."

"Ye're in a cheerfu' frame of mind, laddie," said Ross, looking up. "Have you been drinkin'?"

"No; what's worse, I've been neither eating nor drinking, and I'm desperately hungry."

"And so am I. Have you got any tobacco?"

"Plenty."

"Wait a minute then."

He went and got a cloth and dusted the snow off the packages he had brought in; and then he followed Fitzgerald up the staircase; and was soon engaged in helping him to lay the cloth of the supper-table and open the bottles and what not.

"But I want to ken what has put ye in such fine fettle, man," he said, at length, regarding his companion from across the table. "Some young lass in Ireland, I suppose, has been sending ye a true-love knot. Poor thing! a lassie should never let her sweetheart get so far away as this; it's no safe."

"It isn't that though. I've written something I am pleased with; something I am going to keep for myself," said Fitzgerald, frankly.

"Let us see it, then."

"Oh no. It wouldn't please any one else, I know."

"Then what is the use of it?"

"None."

"And ye are going on amusing yourself with capers instead of getting money and furnishing a house for the lass: is that what you mean?" said the other severely.

"What lass? What are you talking about?"

"I have my suspicions, my lad. But let's see what this is."

"Oh, very well," said Fitzgerald, at once going and fetching the sheet of scrawled paper.

John Ross bent his brows, and proceeded to read the verses line by line, which was an exquisite piece of torture for the writer of them.

"Where is Daramona?" said he, abruptly.

"I don't know."

When he had finished, he looked at it carefully again, and said, in rather a peevish sort of way—

"Well, but have ye nothing more to tell us?"

"No."

"It's a ghastly picture enough; oh ay, I admit that; but—but what is it about?"

"I told you you wouldn't be pleased with it," said Fitzgerald, without any resentment.

"Ye might make some story——"

"Oh yes, I know quite well. I know what an editor would want. There would have to be a third verse with two dead bodies washed up by the sea somewhere; or some definite thing like that. Well, I am not going to patch it up for sale. I am going to keep it as it is—of no use to any one but the owner."

John Ross was not satisfied. He looked at the verses again, and then grumbled—

"It's a good suggestion—it's a capital suggestion—but why dinna ye follow it out?"

"Some people," said Master Willie, slyly, "might hint that about some of your sketches; and yet you won't alter them."

"God bless me!" cried the other, staring at him. "Has the laddie gone daft? Writin' is not pentin', man! Do ye think the public are going to take the trouble to make a story for themselves?"

"I don't mean to ask them," said Fitzgerald, simply. "That is only a little bit for my own private satisfaction. Won't you allow me as much as that? I don't find that eager competition among editors and publishers for my work that I should like. I think the world could get on without literary people—especially literary beginners."

But he himself seemed to detect some kind of false note in this—some echo of what Hilton Clarke might have said. So he added, frankly—

"No, I'm not going to give in yet. And I have got hold of a subject that I think might do."

"What is't?" said his companion, filling his pipe. "No too big, I hope. Something practical?"

"Well, you know, when you were up the Thames, my suppers here were a little bit lonely," Fitzgerald proceeded to say, as he also drew in a chair to the fire. "And I discovered that you could get a plate of cold meat, or a bit of fowl, and a glass of ale, at the *Green Man*, for sixpence. That again entitled you to go into the parlour and have a smoke. I went in, and made a discovery. There are cronies who come there, every evening, and discuss the affairs of the nation. My goodness! I have heard extraordinary statements made in the smoking-rooms of inns;

but never anything quite so fine. And of course, as a stranger, I had to sit quiet and listen; but what I was thinking was that there must be a large population in this country who get their ideas and information from sources that the governing classes don't know anything about. What are they, then? Not the ordinary daily papers; for I read them. And this isn't the only bar-parlour or smoking-room I've been in; and it seemed to me that a series of articles on public-house politics might really be of use. These men have votes."

"Ay, the sources of their information, did ye say?" said Ross, grimly. "Their own heads, maybe?"

"But then," urged Fitzgerald, "when you hear a man make the absurdest statement—about the Prime Minister having written so-and-so to the Pope—and when he declares he saw the letter in print, and when everybody accepts the statement, you begin to ask how such stories can gain currency——"

"The impudence o' the one man, and the ignorance o' the ithers, I should think," said Ross.

"No, for these things are talked of as matters of common knowledge; and yet the ordinary organs of public opinion know nothing of them—indeed, they are quite preposterous. You know, my father keeps an inn. I did not go much into the smoking-room; but I heard things from time to time; and you wouldn't believe the stories that are commonly accepted about the Royal Family, the members of the Government, the House of Lords, and so on——"

"Ye're right there," Ross said. "I would *not* believe them."

"The old gentlemen who meet at the *Green Man* are very loyal at all events," Fitzgerald continued. "Will you come round to-morrow night and listen to them? Oh no; you'd better not; they don't talk over respectfully about Scotchmen."

"I'll come round wi' ye, laddie, if ye like; but what I want to know is how ye're going to get any bread and butter out o' writing down the idiotcy of a lot of bemuddled auld beer-drinkers."

"But they have votes!" contested Fitzgerald. "And

there are thousands and thousands of them throughout the country; and their opinions spread; and surely it is of importance to know what they are saying. If it is absurd, if it is ludicrous, so much the better for me. I don't see why a solemn discussion on the only fit and proper way to govern Frenchmen, by these profound students of history, should not be made amusing enough."

"Oh, that's it, is it? Ye go and get admitted into a brotherhood o' philosophers, and ye watch and wait, and then when they are warmed into friendship and confidence wi' their pipes and their ale, and when their poor wandering old wits begin to dance and stagger about a bit, then ye begin your thumb-nail sketches—you, sittin' in the corner. Why, man, it's like making a fool o' your fayther."

"I think it's a very good thing," said Fitzgerald, with a laugh, "that the one half of the world should know what the other half are saying."

"Get away wi' ye," said Ross, resentfully. "Do ye mean to tell me ye will give a fair and honest report? Do ye mean to tell me there will be anything but gibes and jeers and gross misrepresentations? And you, a laddie just out o' school, to make fun o' men o' mature years, who have pondered over the course o' the world's ways, and learnt the lessons of life from A B C to X Y Z! That is a nice work to undertake! Fathers of families, with the work o' the day over, and maybe glad to get away for an hour from a scolding wife, and doing their best for their country in talking over public affairs, and enjoying a quiet glass in warmth and security; and to have this Mephistopheles there wi' his note-book——"

"If you were to come with me for a night or two," said Fitzgerald, "you might make a few sketches. There are some splendid heads—of the regular old John Bull type, with a churchwarden added. Then we could make a book of the reprinted articles, with your sketches of the people."

His companion glanced at him.

"Your brain is quick, laddie, for new projects."

"But that's what they come to," said Master Willie, indicating, somewhat sadly, his open desk. "They are all nicely tied up there in wrappers, and addressed to myself."

"There's a mine o' wealth in that desk, man," said Ross, sharply. "When I am an Academeecian, and you are the editor of a daily newspaper, we'll both find out the value o' they sketches in that desk there, and in my studio below. Have I no told ye that already until I'm tired? Ye are in too great a hurry, man. Some day ye'll be glad enough to get hold o' these ideas that ye are flinging about ye now."

"Some day!" echoed Fitzgerald. "But in the meantime?"

"In the meantime," said he, rising and putting on his big cloak and his cap, "I'm going down below to my bed. And in the meantime begin your Teniers sketches, and good luck to ye; and dinna fash yourself about what's before ye so long as ye've meat, drink, and clothes; and if there's a young lass in the case, as I jalouse, tell her no to drive any man's cattle, but wait and give the world its ain time to turn. Good-night, laddie," he said, as he opened the door and looked out, "I'm glad there's no moor to cross on a night like this."

CHAPTER XIV.

TWO LETTERS.

"To my trusty and well-beloved Coulin, These:—It is quite true, my dear Willie, that my letters to you have been very short lately; but you have no idea how I have been bothered and worried in coming to terms about that other tour in the south, and then I have had to try and pacify papa. He has taken it into his head that he ought to know more about you and our 'prospects.' Isn't that a horrid word? It is like 'matrimony,' or 'nuptial settlements,' or something in a lawyer's office. I tell him that we are not going to do anything rash; that I for one am quite content to be as I am; and when he writes long letters about the importance of being settled in life and the possibility of his not being long in the world, what can I do but gently remind him that I have earned my own living for a good many years, and have no great fear of being unable to do so? Poor dear papa, he is very kind, but he worries dreadfully. And really I don't know what to say to him. If you were still the sub-editor of that poor defunct magazine, that would be something definite. Shall I tell him you are private secretary to a great lady? Of course, I too wish you had something more settled: but do not imagine, dear Willie, that I am grumbling; for after all are we not just as well off in every respect as we were before we ever saw each other, and why should we not be quite content with things as they are? I hate writing like this. It is like drawing out a marriage-contract. If you were just here for two minutes—I can imagine your coming in at the door

over there, and looking round to see that Miss Patience was not in the room—we should understand each other at once. And if you were at the open door now, do you think I would be long at this table? Don't you think I might meet you half-way, even if the ink-bottle were to be sent spinning across the floor? And you to talk of the coldness of my letters!

"Besides all that worry, I have been hard at work with Professor ——; and fancy the difficulty of doing that by correspondence! He sets me the most terrible tasks; and as it is all science and no sound it is not very lively. But really when you look at some of the songs that are most popular now in drawing-rooms — the air some common phrase, or perhaps borrowed, and of course changing to minor in the second part, and the accompaniment a few simple chords, only fit for children's practising—it seems possible for one to do something a little better. And then shouldn't I like to be able to set one of your songs to music—I mean something like proper music; I think I should not grumble over studying the counterpoint of *that* accompaniment. Do you think I would charge my Coulin a heavy royalty for singing *that* song? There, now: why don't you gentlemen of the press set to work and crush that royalty system? It is most mischievous; and the very best singers are giving in to it now, and of course the greater stupid the composer is, the more eager is he to make the royalty on the sales big. Then the public are stupid, and don't remember that a good singer *can make even the singing of scales pathetic;* and any kind of song sounds as if it were fine if a good singer takes trouble with it. But you are not interested. I can see you are very nearly throwing my poor letter in the fire. But supposing that I put it this way, that A (this sounds like the Professor, but I'm not going to teach *you* harmony), who can sing a little, marries B, who is very fond of singing and music generally. Then they grow older; or A's voice gives out; is there to be no more music? On the contrary, A having been a good little girl, and having devoted a fearful amount of time to the study of music and to practising, can still play B to sleep after dinner. More than that, if they get into trouble, can she not give music-lessons? I believe

this is a clear case of Q. E. D.: is it not, Master Willie?

"But everything in this letter is pure nonsense, and not to be heeded, except the tremendous fact that in ten days *I shall be in Cork again!* think of it!—the very same rooms, too; and the same old piano; and the same little iron gate outside, which used to give such a queer rusty growl and squeak as a sort of friendly good-night to Master Willie, and a hint to come early the next morning, if there were any blue-bells and campions to be looked for out in the woods. Alas! there will be no blue-bells or anything else now—mud, I suppose; and I shall sit at the rainy window, and not stir out until it is time to go away down into the smoky town. There will be nobody there now to make all the place wild and romantic; and to stuff people's heads full of dreams; and to make a poor girl think she never saw anything so lovely as a street in Cork, when it was pouring wet—and the rain from the umbrella all the time running down her left shoulder and arm, because her companion was so careless. And there won't be anybody to say nice things about her in the *Cork Chronicle;* or to walk home with her up the steep hill; or to stop and talk just for a minute or a half-hour or so at the little gate. And what is Inisheen like now?—I suppose the sea dashing all over the shore; the villas shut up; the town a puddle. Sure 'tis not to Inisheen that I'm going! The only comfort would be that the ghosts and pixies of the neighbourhood would have gone. What do the fairies do when it is wet? It must be most uncomfortable up in that glen, with all the branches dripping and no leaves on the trees, and everything damp and cold and miserable. I never heard of fairies in winter.

"But about Inisheen, dear Willie, seriously. I wish you would let me know a little more clearly about that promise you made me give you. I have heard that in Scotland if two people only say before other people that they are man and wife, that is enough, and they are married! I have never been to Scotland, and I don't know; but I should think people might be too quick and then repent. I want to know if the promise we made that night (wasn't it a beautiful night too!) is anything more than a promise? I

have been wondering whether it might be the way young people used to get married when their parents were against it, or the priests perhaps. Situated as we are, sometimes I think it was scarcely wise to bind ourselves like that—and then again I say 'Bother these doubts and troubles; it's all because Professor ——'s conundrums are too difficult.' And I am not going to bother you with them, dear Willie; for you must have enough to think of; and I meant this to be the longest and kindest letter ever written after what you said about my not caring. I do care. You have no right to say that I don't—*and if you were here I would prove it, even to your satisfaction.* There now. So don't say another word about not caring; but write me a long, nice, pleasant letter, professing yourself quite contented with everything that Providence and I have done for you, and telling me all the news of what you are doing, and how you occupy your time, and whether you ever think of poor banished me. You are very ungrateful; you have not the slightest notion of how good I am to you—to be sitting up writing to you like this, when every sensible creature in Belfast is in bed. The fire has gone out; and the room is dreadfully cold; yet here am I writing away with stiff fingers, and the difficulty is to know how to stop. For *I do want you to believe* that I did not mean my letters to be cold; I think it was the weather that got into them; and if you wait till a thaw comes, and read them over again, you will find them quite different. This is all at present from

"Your loving KITTY.

"*P.S.*—Miss Patience is very kind to me just now. She wrote a letter, which she showed me, to the *Northern Whig* here the other day, about the numbers of beggars in the streets; and as sure as ever was, the very next morning there was an article in the newspaper beginning 'From the number of letters which we receive complaining of the prevalence of mendicity in this town,' etc. Oh my! At first she was so lofty she would scarcely speak to me, for she considers me a frivolous kind of creature, but afterwards she grew more gracious, and has been quite compassionately kind to me ever since. Last night she made me wear her

gloves on the way home, for I had forgotten mine, and it *was* cold. She even said that your verses in *Chambers's Journal*, which I showed her, were written with much taste, though she added that she thought this was scarcely a time for writing poetry, considering the serious state of public affairs. Never mind, Willie; there is one person at least who knows better than that; and you need not be afraid that *she* does not appreciate your poetry, as the world will some day.

"Good-night, good-night!—K."

Many and many a time did Master Willie read over this letter, wondering to which to attach the more importance —the obvious outward cheerfulness, or the curious half-suggested little admissions of trouble and doubt. He was so anxious that Kitty should not be anxious! And it was hard on Kitty to be away in those towns, practically alone —for that fool of a creature who was supposed to be her companion, apparently lived only for the pestering of editors —and not hearing very definite news of her lover's success. The space that separated them seemed great enough; but it was the thought of the time that might separate them that he was afraid would weigh on Kitty's spirits. And so, in answering her, he resolved to take no notice of these involuntary backslidings of hers; but to assume that she still had the hope and high courage that possessed her when he and she parted at Inisheen.

"My darling Kitty," he wrote,—"You are all wrong about Inisheen. It is far more beautiful now than in the summer; this is the time it is worth living in—not when idle and fashionable young ladies come down to the little villas and show off their finery along the sands, neglecting their music, and becoming impertinent to their companions. You should see the real Inisheen when the frosty sun shines red through the thin fog; and you get a touch of crimson on the shallow waters of the harbour; and the heavy craft are lying high and dry on the yellow ooze. Just now, my dear Kitty, you would find the sun setting behind the sea, not away up behind the land, and the cliffs looking splendid. Then at night—think of the moonlight on the frost-hardened

moor, with the ice-ponds quite silvery here and there; that is the time for the duck, I can tell you. You think the people are depressed now? Why, this is the sociable time of the year; when you come home stiff with cold to a blazing fire and a warm room; and then you get your dinner over, and people come in, and you have the whiskey put on the table (that's for you, Miss Kitty, not for me) and the kettle steaming on the fire, and then the jokes and stories begin. Then you want to know where the fairies go to in the winter? I can tell you all about that. Mind you, the glen you speak of is quite lovely just now, with red berries and dark green bramble-stems, and lots of colour you don't find at all in the monotonous summer green; but that does not matter; for I confess that the fairies at this time do spend the most of their time feasting and singing and dancing in the great halls within the mountains, though they have scouts sent out from time to time to see what is going on. There was a great banquet given by Don Fierna on the night of Tuesday last in the hall that comes nearest to the hillside above the well that you know. It was a very splendid affair; the vast cavern was all lit up by millions of glow-worms placed along the rocks; but besides that there were innumerable will-o'-the-wisps moving through the air, so that you could see all the colours of the various costumes quite well, although most of the light fell on the long banquet-board, and that again lit up the smiling faces of the ladies and their knights. At the head of the long table Don Fierna sate in state; a terrible, huge person, nearly two feet in height, with a prodigious black moustache and heavy eyebrows; he wore a Spanish hat of black velvet, a scarlet cloak, and on his breast hung his thick gold chain of office, all glittering with precious stones. On his right sate the boy-king of the fairies (who is his heir-apparent), but he was a very beautiful little king, with large blue eyes and golden hair, and he wore a cloak of purple velvet clasped at the neck with gold, and also a crown of pure gold starred with sapphires. Opposite him—that is on Don Fierna's left—sate the boy-king's bride; she was more like a fairy than any of them; she was so slight and fair and delicate; and she wore a cloak of cream-white velvet, which

had a scarlet flower where that was clasped, and her crown was not of gold, but of pure silver with scarlet berries set into it. The other knights and ladies were in all sorts of different costumes and colours; and so were the servitors, who were hurrying this way and that, with the materials of the feast. Oh, did I tell you that in the distance you could hear nightingales? For this is where the nightingales retire to in the winter; but they would be too noisy; so they are shut up in an adjoining cave, and you can only hear their singing like a sort of continuous waterfall. Well, you know, Kitty, I need not tell you all the things they had at the banquet; for the *menu* was rather long; only this, that the wine they drank was made of the honey that you get in the heads of pink clover, and that whereas the lords and the ladies drank out of acorn-cups, Don Fierna's flagon consisted of the shell of a plover's egg set in a handle of bog-oak. Well, when they had got down to the end of the list, Don Fierna rose; and the moment they saw him rise, each lord and lady struck a small silver gong in front of them, so that instantly there was a sort of soft tingling music rising from the whole table and filling the cave; and this immediately hushed the servitors to silence.

"'Your Majesties, my noble lords and gracious ladies,' said Don Fierna, 'before we proceed to the dance, I have a question to ask. What is the name of the mortal who was last at the Well of Vows?'

"All the eyes of the assemblage were now turned to the lower end of the cavern, where near the immense gate, and half-hidden in the dusk, was a rather tall soldier-looking fairy, dressed entirely in blue, with a blue feather in his cap, and a long silver sword by his side.

"'Catherine, my liege,' he said. (It's a curious fact, Kitty, but the fairies always call mortals by their Christian names. I don't know why it is; perhaps it is in imitation of the Church; or perhaps they found that human beings were always changing their surname.)

"'Say, where is this Catherine?' Don Fierna continued—and you could hear his voice through the whole place, though he did not speak so loudly either. But everybody was listening intently.

"'In the north, my liege. It is understood she is coming to your Highness's city of Cork.'

"'She has been observed?'

"'Assuredly, my liege.'

"'She remains faithful to her vow?'

"At this all the ladies lowered their eyes, and looked at each other, wondering.

"'She does, my liege.'

"The words were pronounced with emphasis; and no sooner were they heard than the whole assemblage once more struck the little silver gongs, and it was as if the hollows of the cavern overhead were all filled with the singing of birds.

"'Your Majesties, my lords and ladies,' said Don Fierna, 'we may despatch this piece of business before the revels begin. This faithful one must be rewarded. When she comes to our royal city of Cork, you will assure to her sweet sleep, sweet dreams. You will instruct your attendants. You will banish from her idle fears; you will guard her from the phantoms of the night; the dark and sleep shall be as sweet to her as the day.'

"With that all down the table there was a continuous 'Yes,' 'Yes,' 'Yes,' so that the sound was just like the wind in summer stirring through the beech-trees. Don Fierna then gave his hand to the young queen in white velvet; and the king her sweetheart turned to the noble dame who was next him; and so the whole company went away two and two down the great hall (but leaving enough space between the couples for the ladies' trains to be fairly seen). And then, when the lords and ladies had disappeared into the ballroom, the servitors, in their green jackets and gray hose, forthwith jumped into the chairs of their masters and mistresses; and there was such a noise of laughing and feasting that the very nightingales could no longer make themselves heard.

"And so you see, my dear Kitty, that so far from having anything to fear from Don Fierna and the fairies and the elves of Inisheen, they really have you under their protection; and it is not the least use your worrying about what you promised at the well, and imagining dark things, for

indeed, promise or no promise, the result will be quite the same. Only, it seems to me, it would be base ingratitude on our part for all the kindness of the invisible world of Don Fierna if we were not to make that pilgrimage. And only once in seven years too! Dear Kitty, think what a trip that will be! Of course, in married life, if what every one says is true, and if we should prove to be only like other people, one's views of things must naturally get changed; and no doubt the romance of love may get a little tempered down by familiarity and custom; and you cannot have such a lot of things to talk over as two people who only meet from time to time and have all their future to settle. But just think what a reopening of the past that will be to us two; how we shall seem to see ourselves again standing there as we were seven years before; and if we have had our quarrels or misunderstandings, surely that will be the place to make everything up. My darling, don't look on your promise of that night as something terrible, something to haunt you; but rather as a bit of romance added to the facts of your life—something that you can recall in after days with a kind of smile, perhaps, but yet with a tender smile, and something that will remind you through possibly more prosaic years of what you and I were thinking of once. Is not that sensible, Sweet eyes?

"About your father; you must let him understand, my darling, that I am quite as anxious as he can be that I should have something definite and settled; but Rome was not built in a day; and if you and I are content to wait for a while, I suppose that is our own business. Do you know, Kitty, that you are very profuse in your assurances that you are content with things as they are. I am not; not at all. I try to imagine what our life will be when we are together; and of course that makes me very impatient when I find another stumbling-block in my way. However, there is no reason for grumbling. Plenty of people have come to London to try to earn a living, and been worse served than I have been. I have one hundred pounds a year certain; I have nearly all my time my own; and I am writing so much and offering it in so many quarters that I must in time find out what the newspapers and

magazines would wish to have, or what it is they object to. Mind you, I have my own ideals; and when the chance serves, I work at them; but in this absolute fight for life, I have got to make just such bricks as the builder will buy. Some day, Kitty—when you and I can plan things together—after the fight is over, and we have won the fortress—then I shall be able to work in my own way, careless of everybody, and who knows but that one might then 'strike for honest fame'? I shall look in your eyes; the old days at Inisheen will come back; that will be inspiration enough.

"In the meantime, dear Kitty, if I can't tell you of anything definite and settled as regards my literary work, this at least will please you. I have been thinking over a series of papers describing the nonsense that is talked about politics and political men in tavern parlours and the like—some of it being exquisitely absurd; and I wrote one paper and sent it to the *Hyde Park Journal*. To my astonishment (and a little bit of delight) it appears in this evening's edition; and I send you a copy, though it won't interest you much. Now the *Hyde Park* is a very good paper; and if they will only continue the series, it will be an excellent thing for me, for the varieties of human folly, especially public-house politics folly, are endless. So you see things are not so bad; and you are a good girl to be working so hard—so good that I am not going to talk any more to you about wretched newspapers and my scribbling, and hopes and disappointments. Don't forget that I love you. I shall be glad to hear of your being in Cork, for then Don Fierna will have his little scouts looking after you and protecting you. Do not forget that I love you."

CHAPTER XV.

A SYMPOSIUM.

BUT if Fitzgerald's efforts to obtain a footing in literature had so far been productive mostly of disappointment, he was very clearly succeeding in another direction. Mrs. Chetwynd made no secret of her interest in, and wish to befriend, this young man who seemed to her to resemble in many ways the nephew whom she had lost; and the good old lady, with much tact and delicacy, hinted that he himself might make the suggestion when any opportunity offered. It is not improbable that, if Fitzgerald had asked her for funds wherewith to start another magazine, she would have consented; but he had had enough of such experiments.

In the meantime he strove to make his duties as little of a sinecure as was possible. To his own great delight he had absolute *carte blanche* as regarded the ordering of new books or reviews; and he diligently read the one and glanced over the other, so as to let his patroness know what was going on. But when it actually came to the imparting of this information, the chances were that the little old lady would begin by asking him something about his own affairs, and that not unfrequently led to a mere gossip about the south of Ireland. Once or twice, indeed, she inadvertently called him "Frank;" and then apologised for the mistake, with a quiet tear or two. On another occasion, when he was about to leave, she happened to hear the rain beating heavily against the window.

"Oh, but you must not go out in such a shower, Mr.

Fitzgerald," she said. "Or you might ask Saunders to get you a waterproof."

Indeed, she herself rang, and—with a little hesitation, which Fitzgerald understood perfectly—told the man where he would find the coat. Fitzgerald thanked her, of course; and went out, and down into the hall. But something, he scarcely knew what, forbade his making use of this waterproof.

"Whose is it?" he said to the footman who brought it to him.

"It was Mr. Frank's, sir."

He had guessed as much.

"Oh, thank you," he said, rather absently. "I don't think I shall need it. I have not very far to go."

But if Fitzgerald was slow to avail himself, on his own account, of those hinted offers which the kind old lady had made him, it occurred to him that he might do something for his friend John Ross. Mrs. Chetwynd had heard a good deal about the Scotch artist in Fitzgerald's descriptions of their conjoint occupations and country walks; and at last she said she would like to see some of his work.

"I do not promise to buy any," said the old lady, with her pleasant smile, "for there is scarcely any place we could put them."

Indeed the house was pretty well filled with the ordinary pictorial adornments of an English dwelling—little pieces of Dutch *genre* in heavy old-fashioned frames; gloomy landscapes a long way after Salvator Rosa; one or two imitations of Wilkie; and a large number of historical engravings, glorious in incident, but less satisfactory in draughtsmanship.

"Besides," added Mrs. Chetwynd, "Mary would accuse me of extravagance, so long as I disapprove of her spending her money on a nine-inch telescope."

"A nine-inch telescope?" said Fitzgerald, in surprise—for he had understood that Miss Chetwynd was a young lady of considerable fortune. "Surely that cannot amount to much?"

"So I thought," said the old lady, laughing, "when I heard of it at first. But it appears that the nine inches

refer to the diameter of the glass; and I am told the thing looks more like a thirty-two pounder. And then she spends so much of her money on these wretched people of hers. Well, it is her own, poor thing. I think I must let her have her way. She shall have the window in her room altered; and she shall have her thirty-two pounder; and then I will buy some of your friend's pictures."

"Oh, but I could not have you buy them on my recommendation," said Fitzgerald, in some alarm. "That would never do. You must have some skilled advice—I don't know enough about pictures——"

"But according to your account, they are just the very paintings to suit a blind old woman," she said brightly. "I shall see nothing of them but their colour, which you say is so good——"

"But—but I would ask you to have some one else's judgment, Mrs. Chetwynd," said he, earnestly. "Of course, I think them good; I don't see how the work of a man who studies as hard as he does, and who can talk so ably about it, can be anything else. But if you will allow me, I will bring up a few of his sketches; and you might ask some one who is a good judge——"

"As for that, there will be no difficulty," she said, promptly. "We know several of the Academicians. It is not unusual for one or other of them to drop in to dinner and have a chat with the scientifics."

"Academicians?" said Fitzgerald, uneasily. "Not *very* old ones?"

She named one or two.

"Oh," said he, gladly, "any one of these would do. I am not afraid of them."

But this conversation had results for himself as well as for his friend. Fitzgerald was in the habit of leaving a minute or two before a quarter to seven, which was the hour for Mrs. Chetwynd's *table d'hôte*, as she called it; and even then he sometimes encountered in the hall a guest who had strolled in before the proper time. But this talk about Ross's pictures had made him forgetful; and he was just about to ask his patroness some further question as to what kind of landscape she preferred, when a gong sounded below.

"Goodness gracious me!" exclaimed the old lady. "There is dinner; and Mary has not come back from South Kensington! Mr. Fitzgerald, will you kindly give me your arm downstairs—I am so blind now; and the people will be coming in, and nobody to receive them!"

But at this very moment, Miss Chetwynd made her appearance—a trifle breathless, for she had run upstairs.

"Come away, auntie!" she said, cheerfully, as she hastily took off her bonnet and cloak and threw them on a chair. "But why don't you ever persuade Mr. Fitzgerald to stay to dinner? I know he dislikes scientific people——"

It is needless to say that this invitation was warmly seconded; and Fitzgerald, who was quite aware of the informal nature of this nightly *table d'hôte*, and who, perhaps, had some little curiosity to see in the flesh one or other of the celebrated people that Mrs. Chetwynd talked so much about, very gratefully and modestly accepted. He did not even make a pretence of refusing. Mary Chetwynd's proposal had been made so simply and frankly, that he met it with equal frankness. He walked into the dining-room after the two ladies, with much calmness; and this time he had nothing to fear about evening dress.

There were three gentlemen in the room. One was away in a corner, examining, through a double eye-glass that he held in his hand, one of the engravings on the walls; the other two were standing on the hearth-rug, their backs to the fire. The taller of these was a long, thin, cadaverous man, who stooped a little; he had piercing gray eyes under shaggy eyebrows; and very white teeth which showed when he laughed his prodigious laugh; him Fitzgerald recognised at once, having seen his photograph often enough, as a Dr. Bude. The other he did not know; but he thought it very cool of both these gentlemen to take the entrance of the two ladies with so much indifference. They finished what they had been talking, or rather laughing about; then they came forward and shook hands; and then sat down as it pleased them at the table. But this indifference was unintentional; for very soon, when some other guests had come in, and everybody had sat down, and

dinner had begun, it was very clear that Dr. Bude was amongst the foremost to amuse and entertain his hostess. And it must be confessed that there was very little science talked amongst this nondescript gathering of friends and acquaintances. There was a good deal of joking, it is true, when it became known that Mary Chetwynd was to be allowed to have her big telescope; but for the most part the talk was all about public characters, and what So-and-so had said, and where So-and-so was staying. These scientific gentlemen seemed to know a good deal about the comparative merits of certain country-houses as places of temporary lodgment; and their talk about fish-ponds, and cooking, and the advantages of having a well-heated hall in the middle of a house, was not so very much raised, after all, above the level of Mr. Scobell. Master Willie had more than once wondered what figure Mr. Scobell would cut in this familiar little assemblage of great people; but indeed their conversation was not of an extremely serious nature.

He sat next to Dr. Bude; and, as Dr. Bude was engaged in describing, with tremendous laughter, to Mrs. Chetwynd, a conversation he had had with a gentleman whom he had met at a City dinner, Fitzgerald had plenty of leisure to study the rest of the guests, and also his hostess's niece. He had had no such opportunity before. He had scarcely ever seen Miss Chetwynd. She was mostly engaged in the East of London; when she was in the house, she was occupied in her own room. And now it seemed to him that her expression was a little more gentle, less resolute and self-sufficient, than he had fancied it was. The head was small; and beautifully shaped; and she wore her hair more tightly brushed than was the fashion of the time, so that the symmetry of the head was clearly seen. Her features were fine; her complexion somewhat pale; and now he saw that her eyes, which hitherto he had considered to be somewhat cold in their clear, direct way of looking at one, were really of a beautiful blue, with dark lashes, and could be expressive enough, whether she seemed interested in what her neighbour was saying, or was joining in some general merriment. And when she had to submit to some

raillery about the forthcoming big telescope, she did it very prettily.

"You know," she said, "the time will come when people will look back on Lord Rosse's telescope as a mere toy."

"Why, of course," said Dr. Bude, coming to her rescue. "You are quite right, Miss Chetwynd. The human race will be driven to invent not only immense telescopes, but also means of conveying themselves to some other planet—that is, when this one grows too cold for human subsistence. When the earth cools, and the process is going on now, so that humanity must flit, you may depend on it by that time science will have invented means for their removal to a more generous climate. But there must be a beginning in the way of experiment. I appeal to Professor Sims. The Royal Society should do something."

Professor Sims, who was the shorter of the two strangers whom Fitzgerald had found standing before the fire, and who was a white-haired, rosy-faced old gentleman, with gold spectacles, answered immediately—

"No doubt, no doubt," said he. "The necessity must arise. And if you look at what science has done within the last ten years, who is to say what she may not have accomplished within the next—what whall I say?"

"'An eternity or two,' was Alfred de Musset's phrase," suggested Fitzgerald: but it instantly occurred to him that to mention even the name of a sentimentalist like Alfred de Musset among these hard-headed people was absurd. However, it did not much matter; for presently they were considering whether, when the world had got chilled down to the condition of the moon, the last traces of human occupation would be the Pyramids or the Colosseum. Some one suggested the buried cities of Mexico; and so the matter dropped.

The dinner was a plain one as compared with the banquet which Hilton Clarke had given in the Albany; and Fitzgerald observed that the majority of the gentlemen present drank no wine, or, at most, a little claret and water. Indeed, the whole of the proceedings were somewhat abnormal; for, directly the frugal repast was over,

coffee and cigarettes were produced, and the ladies remained. Then one or another of the guests would get up, and, without any formal apology, shake hands with Mrs. Chetwynd and her niece, and say "Good-night!" or "Au revoir," or perhaps nothing at all, to the others, and be off.

"I must be off, too, directly," said Dr. Bude to Fitzgerald. "I have some people coming to look at a few simple experiments with the spectroscope; and I must go and see that my battery is ready. Will you come? I can show you a nine-inch telescope, since that seems to interest you. Will you come?"

"Oh, certainly; I shall be delighted," said Fitzgerald, with great eagerness. This Dr. Bude had been very kind in one or two little things he had said during dinner. He knew about the *Household Magazine*. He knew about Fitzgerald's present duties. He seemed a friendly sort of person; and the mere invitation was a compliment coming from one so well known.

The only doubt in Fitzgerald's mind was as to the propriety of his going away while any of the others remained. He had no lecture to deliver; nor any learned society to attend. Moreover, there did not seem much chance of his explaining the circumstances to Mrs. Chetwynd; for the pretty old lady—who seemed so pleased that all these people should drop in to chat with her for an hour—was listening intently to the gentleman on her left; and he was describing the very remarkable high jinks he had observed in a great person's house immediately after dinner—the ladies, indeed, taking part in them; and he was warmly defending these on hygienic principles: although hoping that nothing about them would get into the papers, through some unfortunate accident happening. However, Dr. Bude got him out of the dilemma; for he rose and said—

"Good-night, Mrs. Chetwynd. I must be off to get my things ready; and I am going to take Mr. Fitzgerald with me, to show him what a nine-inch telescope is like."

He went out of the room without saying good-bye to anybody else, Fitzgerald following; and the latter, in a minute or so, found himself, for the first time in his life, in a private hansom—a vehicle which went so smoothly and

so rapidly that he seemed to be going through the air on wings.

Dr. Bude's house was in the Brompton Road—a rather shabby-looking building outside, but spacious within. Fitzgerald followed his host up to the first floor, the back part of which consisted of an apartment that seemed partly an observatory, partly a library, and partly a laboratory. An assistant was at the moment arranging some glass tubes, and two spectroscopes, on a table; and Dr. Bude, throwing off his coat, though the dusky room was far from being over warm, proceeded to test the various wires and other apparatus, all of which were a profound mystery to his guest.

"I suppose you see a great deal of Miss Chetwynd?" he said: and at the same moment the electric light flashed into a tube, causing Fitzgerald's eyes to jump.

"Oh no, very little."

"She's a very remarkable woman," said the other, with decision: though, indeed, he was now on his knees on the floor, examining the battery. "She might do something, that girl. She has a fine brain—acute and penetrating. But she has had no training, that is the mischief of it. She should have been brought up on mathematics. But, after all, the number of women who have done anything in pure science is very small. I think she is throwing herself away on this education of the poorest classes—that is vestrymen's work; though perhaps I should not say so; for I don't know precisely what she is at."

Then he rose; and clapped his hands together, to get rid of the dust.

"I was amused," he said, with a laugh. "She asked me what would be the most effectual way of teaching these ignorant people the perniciousness of breathing foul air. You know how they huddle together for warmth; and cover the children over with such bed-clothes as they have got. I think she was going to deliver a lecture on 'Fresh Air and Pure Water' somewhere or other——"

"Yes, I know she has done that," said Fitzgerald, as the tall, lean man turned towards the table again, and continued his preparations.

"Well, she very naturally concluded that tumbling gases of different weights into jars, or extinguishing tapers, would not be impressive enough: so I told her to get a sparrow, to tie its feet down to a bit of board; and to put over it a bell-jar before these people, and ask them to watch what will happen to the bird merely through its breathing its own breath. Of course the little creature becomes asphyxiated, staggers and falls, and ultimately dies. Doubtless, I told her, the most effective way of exhibiting the experiment would be to raise the bell-jar during the process of asphyxiation, and show the reviving effect of the fresh air; then to close it again until death preached its moral. She said she would do that. She was quite delighted. What lesson could be more obvious?——"

But at this moment there was a sound of footsteps on the stairs; and the Doctor had to whip on his coat, and go and receive two or three young people who now entered. Fitzgerald did not like that story about the sparrow. Miss Chetwynd was no Lesbia, clearly. And although the conscience of a wild-fowl shooter is apt to be hard; and although he knew quite well that the asphyxiation of a sparrow or even twenty dozen sparrows was scarcely to be considered if it induced a certain number of human beings to treat their children more humanely—still—still—

The Doctor came back.

"I have a sort of class," he explained to Fitzgerald, "who come and practise a little and ask questions, before the vulgar world arrives to be amused. I hope it won't be tedious for you. If you prefer it, my assistant will arrange the telescope for you; the night is beautifully clear——"

"Oh no, not at all. Was Miss Chetwynd's experiment successful?"

"Why I forgot to finish my story! She got the sparrow, and the string, and the board, and the bell-jar, all complete; and she thought, to make sure, she would make her first trial before her aunt in the drawing-room. And it was all quite successful until the first stagger of the little creature; then she hesitated; then she shook her head. Off came the bell-jar at once; she opened the window; and cut the

string; and out went Jack Sparrow. Nothing would induce her to repeat the experiment."

"I should not have thought she was so sentimental," said Fitzgerald.

"Ah, that's just it," said the Doctor, as he heated a bit of copper-wire at a gas jet. "A woman never ceases to be a woman, whatever she is at. Her reason fails her when she is confronted by suffering; her heart overmasters her head. But in pure science that girl might have done something, if she had had proper training. She has a fine quality of brain. I can tell how much people know by their questions. Her questions are always sharp and to the point. When she comes here she knows precisely what she wants——"

The good Doctor seemed to like talking about Mary Chetwynd; but on this occasion he was checked by the appearance of the young lady herself, who arrived quite alone. She seemed surprised to find Fitzgerald there, though she said nothing beyond an ordinary greeting. She at once went forward to the table; and the Doctor was particular in finding her a chair, though the others who were now arriving were allowed to stand about anyhow.

What followed was quite unintelligible to Fitzgerald, for at that time the theory of spectroscopy was much less familiar to the public than it is nowadays, when every second schoolgirl has a spectroscope in her pocket. But if the meaning of the experiments was dark to him, the manners of the students were interesting enough; and he could readily distinguish between the serious ones, who were mostly silent, or only asking a question now and again, and the flippant ones, who exclaimed with terror at the ghastly appearance of each other's faces when a little common salt was ignited at a Bunsen burner, and who cried, "Oh, how sweetly lovely!" when a trifle of chloride of lithium spread abroad a rose-red flame. But perhaps it was the demeanour of Mary Chetwynd that most engaged his attention; and he could see that her questions were the most promptly answered, and that to her most of the explanations were addressed. Fitzgerald, standing apart by the mantelpiece, and observing, out of that motley group,

only these two—the long, lean, pale-faced teacher, and the young lady student, who sat in a chair there, following his words with a serious attention—began to dream dreams. Why should not these two cold intelligences go through the world together, like twin stars sailing through the night? He was considerably her elder, to be sure; but the girl who was sitting there, with the fine, serious, thoughtful face, was more likely to think of his high reputation than of his years. What a strange love-making it would be! Moonlit walks with disquisitions on the spectrum of Sirius. The Bunsen burner looked ghostly enough; but he knew that Don Fierna and the elves would fly away from it. He could scarcely help laughing when he thought of these two tall persons standing on each side of the little stream, and holding each other's hand. What would the phrase be? "Over HO_2 in rapid motion?" And then he thought of Kitty. Kitty did not know, probably, that water consisted of hydrogen and oxygen; but Kitty knew how to make love. He sent her a kiss in imagination. By this time of the night she would be at home—away up there on the hill, opposite Shandon Bells.

These speculations about the possible future of Dr. Bude and Miss Mary Chetwynd were somewhat rudely dispelled by the entrance of a stout and comely dame in rustling black silk, who cheerfully greeted the various pupils, and kissed Miss Chetwynd very affectionately, and then, addressing the lecturer as "My dear," asked him for certain keys. The next minute Fitzgerald was introduced to this buxom and good-humoured-looking lady, who turned out to be Mrs. Bude; so that he had to bid good-bye to that horoscope of the scientific lovers. Mrs. Bude did not remain long; she was evidently in a hurry; Fitzgerald returned to the contemplative study of the heads before him, as these were illumined from time to time by the various colours of different metals.

Something else was going forward, however, on this first floor. The drawing-room, with which this observatory was connected, had been brilliantly lit up; and now steps could be heard on the stairs outside, and the names of guests being announced as they reached the door. Then some of

these began to stroll from the drawing-room into the observatory; and very soon the Doctor was busy enough, with greeting these new-comers, and with trying to show them something they could understand. His patience and good-humour seemed to Fitzgerald admirable. "Oh, what a lovely green!" "Oh, how sweetly pretty!" "Must I shut one eye to look through?" "Doctor, why should one line be so much clearer than the others?" "And so you know that all these things are in the sun?" "Do show my husband that pretty green colour again!" The good Doctor appeared to be talking to all these ladies and gentlemen at once; sometimes frankly laughing at their questions; and not at all displeased that he should be addressed as if he were the conductor of a show. Fitzgerald could perceive that Miss Chetwynd was calmly regarding the new-comers; once or twice he caught her smiling to herself.

Amid the crowd of people, who kept strolling in from the large and well-lit drawing-room to the small and dusty laboratory, and strolling back again, there was one lady who very much interested him, partly because she was remarkably pretty, and partly because of a chance exclamation of hers that he overheard. The Doctor was explaining to a little group of people the source of colour in objects—the absorption or reflection of the different rays of light, and so forth; and in illustration he brought a little bunch of scarlet geraniums in a glass; turned off the light; then ignited some common salt at the Bunsen burner, producing a powerful yellow flame. Of course the geraniums became of a ghastly gray; and this pretty lady, perhaps not quite understanding that nothing had happened to them, exclaimed to herself "Poor things!" Fitzgerald liked her for that. She seemed to recognise some principle of life in the flowers, as though they were associated with humanity somehow; and although there might have been no profound intention in her remark; and although, when the gas was lit again, the geraniums were found to be quite as scarlet as ever, nevertheless Fitzgerald was convinced that she must be a nice sort of woman. Imagine, then, his surprise when, later in the evening—the experiments being all over, and he him-

self, doubtful whether he ought to remain, and yet anxious to send some account of so brilliant an assemblage to Kitty, rather keeping himself in the background—he found himself dragged from his obscurity by the diligent Doctor, and forthwith introduced to this very lady, and directed to take her downstairs to supper. Not only that; but the name she bore was also that of a distinguished Academician. Was it possible, he asked himself, as he conducted her downstairs, that she should be the wife of the great painter? He determined to find out; here, indeed, would be something to talk over with John Ross.

Well, he got her a place at the long table; and timidly asked her what she would take—a sandwich, perhaps?

"I am not so young as I look," said this pretty, English-looking woman, with the large girlish gray eyes. "I am the mother of three children; and at my time of life I know better than to destroy myself with sandwiches. No—anything else you can get."

She was an amazingly frank person; and very pleasant in her speech and her laugh. When he had got her some cold turkey, and some bread, and a glass of claret, he ventured to ask her, after some vague reference to something on the walls, whether she was very fond of pictures.

"I admire my husband's, of course," she said.

Then he knew he was right.

"Oh, of course," said he, with greater confidence. "Every one does that. I suppose, now," he added, rather hesitatingly, "your husband has become so accustomed to his distinguished position—I mean, so familiar with his place in the Academy—that he couldn't quite realise the anxiety of the outside men, of those who are not well known, about the fate of their pictures? That would not interest him much, would it? I mean it would not be possible to induce him to interest himself in—in helping, for example—an artist who was not known——"

This was not at all satisfactory, especially as she seemed to imagine he was pleading for himself.

"Are you an artist?" she asked, at length, with a frank look.

"Oh no."

"Well, then, to tell you truth," said she, "I don't know what anxiety the outsiders may feel; but it isn't half of the anxiety they cause me. I know when my husband is on the Hanging Committee it thoroughly breaks him down for three weeks after. It is by far the hardest work of the year for him. And then the thanks!—to be abused by the public, and accused of envy by the outsiders. Envy, indeed! I wonder who it is that my husband needs envy!"

"Why, not any one!" said Fitzgerald, warmly; for he liked the human nature, the frank sincerity, of this woman.

"I wish they'd let the outsiders come in and hang their own pictures for themselves!" she said, with a laugh. "I suppose they'd all quite agree. I wish they would paint better, and grumble less."

"Oh, but the outsider I was thinking of is not like that," said Fitzgerald, pleasantly, for he was not in the least offended by her humorous petulance. "He paints very well; and does not grumble at all. He is quite content. Only, I thought if your husband would be so kind as merely to remember his name, and look at his work when it is sent in——"

"But my husband was on the Council last year; so he won't be again for some time—thank goodness!"

"So there is no use in my asking you to intercede?"

"No; not even if you offer to bribe me with sandwiches. But," she added, looking up at him for a moment, "what is your friend's name?"

"John Ross."

"That is not a difficult name to remember. John Ross. Why are you interested in him—you are not Scotch?"

"He is a neighbour of mine; and—and he does good work, I think—and ought to be better known."

"Landscape or figures?"

"Landscape."

"I guessed as much. The Scotchmen take to landscape because they can't draw. Now take me back, please, for I must fetch my husband and get home; and I shan't forget your friend's name; for I never had sandwiches offered me as a bribe before."

He escorted her upstairs again; and then seized the

first opportunity of slipping away. In the hall he found he had been preceded by Miss Chetwynd, who, quite alone, was tying something round her neck, the night being cold. He hesitated for a second, not quite knowing what was proper for him to do; and then, at a venture, he went forward and said—

"Miss Chetwynd, can I get your carriage for you?"

"No, thank you," she said, as he thought, a trifle ungraciously and stiffly. "My cab is outside. I know the man."

The servant opened the hall-door, and she passed out; Fitzgerald lingering for a moment under pretence of buttoning his overcoat. Her refusal to allow him to be of this slight service had been, as he considered, somewhat too explicit. What had he done? Or was she unaware that her manner was, at times, a little too decided and cold and repellent?

It mattered not to him. He walked away through the chill dark night to the vacant courtyard and the empty room, thinking what a memorable and wonderful evening that had been for him. Perhaps never such another would happen to him; for when again was he likely to meet a great man of science to carry him off, on the friendly inspiration of the moment, and introduce him to such a gathering? And indeed the spectacle had moved him to neither emulation nor regret. It was not the way of life he would choose, if it were open to him. He had his own dreams and ambitions; his own notions of what was beautiful and worth having in the world; and if Mary Chetwynd had any vague fancy that he wished to gain an entrance into distinguished or fashionable society, either through a scientific doorway or through any other, she was quite mistaken. But more probably she had not even given a thought to the matter; and he was content.

CHAPTER XVI.

A MORNING WALK AND OTHER MATTERS.

[*N.B.*—This chapter may very conveniently be passed over by those who wish to get on with "the story;" for it contains little beyond a description of one or two influences which were at this time in a measure forming the character of this young man, and so far shaping the work of his after-life.]

NEXT morning Fitzgerald had promised to go for a walk with his Scotch neighbour, who had a theory that neither could he paint, nor his companion write, properly, unless they went forth from time to time to see what the outside world was looking like. Moreover, these periodical excursions were undertaken without any regard to the weather. John Ross used to say that anybody could admire the chromo-lithograph aspects of nature; but that it wanted training and affectionate care and watchfulness to observe the beautifulness of gray days and wet roads and wintry skies. Fitzgerald, of course, was nothing loth. He had brought his shooting boots and gaiters with him from Ireland, and he had a serviceable waterproof; he was just as ready as Ross to go splashing away through the mud to Kew, to see what the wilderness part of the Gardens (a favourite haunt of theirs, and but little known to the public) was like in driving rain, or in feathery snow, or in clear hard frost when the red berries shone among the green. It was wonderful how interesting the world had become to him. He no longer confined his attention, when out

walking, to the animals and birds he might observe (with rapid calculations as to whether they were within shot or without); now, if there was nothing else to be seen, the gradation of light on the puddles of a rainy road he found to be quite worth looking at. Nothing had been taken away from the world; but a great deal added. It was of itself something that he had learnt not even to despise the commonplace gray days that in the winter so frequently hung over Chelsea.

But he had an added interest in these various perambulations of which his companion knew nothing—he was continually on the outlook for some pretty little cottage, some quaint river-side house, that would meet with the approval of Kitty's black eyes when the great time came. This imaginary nest-building was a most fascinating kind of occupation. Sometimes he would go away by himself and ramble through all sorts of strange suburban places, in the hope of meeting with something so very quaint and picturesque and secluded that even Kitty—who rather avoided that subject, and would not express any preference for town or country—might have her curiosity aroused. So far the most engaging place he had seen was a small, odd-looking house in Grosvenor Road, fronting the river. It appeared to have been an old-fashioned tavern at one time; but now it was a little private dwelling, with odd inequalities about the windows and gables, and very prettily painted in white and green. Were not these the very windows for Kitty to adorn with trailing plants and flower-boxes? Again and again, at a convenient distance, he stood and watched the house; and tried to imagine Kitty actually there, reaching up her arms to put a branch so, or so; perhaps singing the while; perhaps whistling to the blackbird in the cage. There was the slight drawback, it is true, that the house was not to be let; but then he and Kitty had still a long time of waiting before them, and who knew what might not happen in that interval? Besides, where there was one little habitation that seemed so charming there might be others; and so, whatever subject John Ross might be descanting on in his fiery-headed fashion, and however attentively Fitzgerald might be

listening, there was nothing to prevent the eyes of the latter from wandering from cottage to cottage, from villa to villa, from garden to garden, in a sort of vague mechanical quest for a pretty resting-place for Kitty.

But this particular morning was clear and cold and fine —an excellent morning for walking; and of course Fitzgerald had a great deal to tell about his experiences of the previous night, and his proposal to take up some of his companion's pictures to show to Mrs. Chetwynd.

"You see, if she were to take two or three of them, it might be a great advantage to you," observed Fitzgerald.

"It would be a very distinct and solid advantage," said the red-bearded gentleman, with a laugh.

"Oh, but I mean apart from the money. Mrs. Chetwynd knows some of the Academicians; and if your pictures were seen by them at her house, don't you see, it might do you good. Oh, that reminds me. I met the wife of an Academician last night. I sha'n't tell you her name, for she said something about Scotch artists that you won't like."

"What was it?"

"She said they took to landscape because they couldn't draw."

No doubt Fitzgerald repeated this with the malicious intention of making his companion angry; and, indeed, for a moment John Ross stood stock still; but then again he laughed good-naturedly and continued his walking.

"Ay, I'm thinking her husband maun be one o' the story-tellers."

"Story-tellers?"

"There's plenty of them among the English artists—men who ought to belong to your business, no' to mine. Pent is what they know least about; but they can tell a pretty story—out o' a book. That is something, after all. If they know little about colour, at least they can help the ignorant public to a bit of sentiment or the like. But there's one thing the Scotch have done, my lad; and that again and again; they have had to bring both English literature and art back to nature. It was when people were given over to the wretched artifeecialities of the Pope

school that Allan Ramsay's 'Gentle Shepherd' and Thomson's 'Seasons' got them back out of that hothouse to look at real nature and human nature——"

"Pope? Is that what you think of Pope?" said his companion, eagerly; for he had his own grudge on that score.

"Pope?" repeated John Ross. "I consider——"

But as it turned out there was to be no conjoint dancing on a dead man's grave; for at this moment Ross's attention was drawn to two young ladies who were crossing the Hammersmith Road in front of them.

"Heaven save us!" he exclaimed. "Did ever ye see the like o' that?"

"Their waists, do you mean?" his companion said; for indeed the two young ladies, probably sisters, for they were dressed precisely alike, had waists of such small dimensions that more than one person had turned and stared at them.

"The ignorant craytures," said John Ross, half angrily, "to think that men admire a spectacle like that! Have they no common sense?"

"They must have pretty good muscles, at all events, to have pulled themselves in like that," his companion said.

"But, bless me, common sense should tell a young lass that it's the foolishest thing in the world for her to remind people that she has an internal economy at all! She ought to have none, in your imagination. She ought to be all spirit and poetry; just an amiable young life looking out on the world with sweetness and innocence, and a wish to be friendly. But when ye see a waist like that, confound it, ye're made to ask yourself where the mischief she has put her liver!"

John Ross seemed to resent the appearance of these young ladies, as if he had sustained some personal injury.

"I say that anything that suggests that a young lass has a spine, or a liver, or anything of the kind, is a most intolerable nuisance," said Ross, angrily. "And to deform one of the most beautiful things in the world, too—that is the figure of a young woman from the shoulders to the waist. Look at that; do you know what that is?"

He took out his sketch-book, and made a few rapid lines on one of the blank pages.

"A vase, I suppose."

"That is the Canopian vase; that has always been understood to have been imitated from the female figure. But look what it would be if the base were to be narrowed like the waist of one of those girls. Look; where is your proportion now? What kind of a vase is that?"

"Well, if you only drew the lines down a little bit farther, it would be like one of the Pompeian earthen jars——"

"Ay, the jars they stuck into the ground. Poor craytures, that's just what they lasses there are working for. I wonder if they havena got a mother to skelp them."

However, the disappearance of the young ladies round a corner removed the cause of his grumbling; and very soon he had quite recovered his equanimity. For now the air was growing clearer; the roads wider; the gardens between the houses were larger; and the sunlight was making the wintry trees and bushes look quite cheerful.

"Look at that, now," Ross said, coming to a sudden halt before some tall maples, the branches of which, reaching away into the blue, were of the most brilliant gold where the bark had peeled off. "Can you get anything stronger in colour than that in the middle of summer? Look how fine the blue is above."

"Yes, but it would look top-heavy in a picture, wouldn't it?"

"No, no, my lad; there you're mistaken. Sunlight always comes out; no fear of yellow not holding its own. If you were painting that, you would find the blue go as far back as ever ye wanted it. I think if I were a king, that's what I would have in my dining-chamber—solid gold up to about the height of your head; and then above that all a pale blue, and the roof a pale blue, so that you could let your eyes go away a great distance when you lifted them from the table. And then, in case the solid gold of the wall would make you feel as if you were in a metal case, I would have a procession of figures, all in pure scarlet, perhaps mediæval figures, with trellis-work, or better still, a Greek procession——"

"You would have plenty of colour, then," said Fitzgerald, laughing. "Gold, scarlet, and pale blue."

"The three primaries; why not?"

But as there was not much apparent chance of either of these two having to study this matter practically, it was abandoned; and very soon they found themselves in the wilderness lying between the formal part of Kew Gardens and the river. Here it was a great delight to Fitzgerald to find himself so completely removed from all the surroundings of town life—watching the squirrels and the birds and what not, while his companion now and again took jottings of what he called the anatomy of the different kinds of trees. The sunlight was quite clear here; and there was plenty of rich colour among the dark green firs and the browns and reds of withered leaves, and the glowing scarlet of the berries that still remained on the bushes. Then they walked back to the bridge; and for the first time since he had left Inisheen, Fitzgerald got into a boat, and enjoyed the new sensation of managing a pair of sculls, while Ross sat in the stern, and seemed pleased that the pull against the heavy current was just about as much as Master Willie wanted. And then they had a snack of luncheon at the nearest hotel; and then they set out to walk back to London, with the chill gray dusk of the afternoon slowly settling down.

But when they did get back to the big hollow-sounding studio, Fitzgerald discovered that he had a very difficult task before him. Whether it was that John Ross was over fond of these children of his brain and skill, and disliked parting with them, or whether it was that he detested the pecuniary side of his profession altogether, Fitzgerald found that he could get no help from him in the selection of the pictures or sketches he wished to take to Mrs. Chetwynd.

"How can I tell what any one's fancy may be?" said he, almost surlily. "Most likely she would rather have a picture of a white lap-dog with a bit of pink ribbon round its neck."

"Well, we will see," remarked Fitzgerald, who had at length chosen out half-a-dozen canvases, and was tying them together. "And now I must have a cab—for the first time since I came to London; but I expect you to pay

that, Ross, if I sell any of your pictures. That will be my commission."

Moreover, he was himself a little anxious. As the hansom (which was not quite so smooth-going as that of Dr. Bude) carried him up to Hyde Park Gardens he began to suspect that some of Ross's disinclination had probably arisen from the fear that his work might be misunderstood and subjected to the ignominy of refusal. That was bad enough at the Academy; but in the case of the Academy, there was also the consoling possibility that it was want of space which was the practical cause of rejection. Mr. Ross was a proud man in his way; little as he was disposed to over-rate the value of his work. And Fitzgerald, when he was actually carrying these canvases upstairs, began to think that he had assumed a very serious responsibility.

There is no doubt that this kind old lady, who examined these landscapes as well as she could with the aid of a large magnifying-glass, would at once, in her good-humoured way, have purchased some of them, or perhaps even the whole of them; but this he would not hear of. It was not altogether as a favour to an unknown artist that he wished to dispose of them, he gently reminded her: perhaps if one or two of her friends saw these studies they would be very glad to get them. In any case he would rather have her wait for their opinion.

"Oh, very well," said she, good-naturedly. "And the price?"

Fitzgerald flushed uneasily.

"I could not get my friend to say exactly. Perhaps —perhaps if you were to ask Mr. Sydenham to value them—— Being an Academician he ought to know."

"Oh, but that would never do. So much depends on circumstances. So much depends on your friend's own valuation. Have you no guess?"

"Well," said Fitzgerald, desperately, "I may as well make a guess; for Mr. Ross won't help me. I think they are worth more—but he is not known, of course—and I don't think £20 each would be too much——"

"Would it be too little?" said the little old lady, with a

charming frankness. "For who knows what fancy some of our friends may take for them?"

"If you would not mind asking Mr. Sydenham," he again suggested.

"Well, I will," she said. "On that basis, that if we take them at £20 each your friend won't be greatly dissatisfied."

"I think he will be very much pleased. Only," he added, with some hesitation, "if I might ask another favour, it would be that, supposing Mr. Sydenham does not come here this evening, or very soon, indeed, you might not be too long in arriving at some decision. The fact is, I would not like Mr. Ross to be thinking that his studies were waiting out on approval, as it were——"

"I understand perfectly," said the good old lady, "and there will be no delay, I promise you."

That night Fitzgerald was in Ross's studio. Both were smoking and talking; but Ross had his sketch-book on his knee, and also handy a box of water-colours. He was illustrating a favourite theory of his that, after such a walk as they had had that morning, the memory recalls most clearly, if not exclusively, such objects as were lit up by the sunlight; and he was jotting down memoranda of things he could remember—the brass knob on a house door, the zinc roof of a conservatory, a red cart-wheel against a gray wall, and so forth, and so forth—in an aimless sort of way, and mainly for amusement.

"There's somebody going up your stair," he said.

Fitzgerald went out and called "Who's there?"

"A letter for Mr. Fitzgerald," said a voice from above.

"All right. Bring it here. Do you want an answer?"

"No, sir," said the lad, "I believe not, sir. Good-night, sir."

"Good-night."

Fitzgerald hesitated. He knew the letter was from Mrs. Chetwynd, for the address was in Miss Chetwynd's handwriting; and he would gladly, for the sake of preparation, have opened it in his own room. But here was Ross calling from within to know what was the matter; and so he boldly resolved to enter and open the letter before him, whatever the decision might be.

"DEAR MR. FITZGERALD,"—this was what Miss Chetwynd's clear, beautiful, precise handwriting said, "My aunt says you seemed anxious to know as soon as possible the fate of your friend's sketches; and desires me to send you this note to-night. They have been much admired, I believe. Mr. Sydenham took one; Dr. Bude another; and my aunt keeps the remaining four; and I am asked to enclose this cheque for £120, as she thinks that was about what you suggested.

"Yours faithfully,

"MARY CHETWYND."

"Now isn't that a kind old lady?" said Fitzgerald. "Fancy her taking the trouble to send a message at this time of night. Well, what do you say, Ross? Is it enough? You know I had nothing to guide me. Is it enough?"

John Ross was holding the letter in his hand, and staring at it absently.

"I wonder which one he took. I would give anything just to find that out," said he, apparently to himself.

Fitzgerald took the letter from him, and glanced at it again.

"Why, of course," said he. "I did not notice it. That was the Academician himself who took one. I shall find out to-morrow which one he bought. But I want to know whether the money is sufficient."

"Plenty, plenty. Enough and to spare."

"Then I will trouble you for eighteenpence, that I paid for the cab."

"We'll make a better job of it than that, my lad," said he, coming to the money question at last, and shoving the cheque across the small table. "Ye'll just take a clear half o' that; and ye'll take a holiday, and go away over to Ireland, and see the young lass that ye're aye thinking about, though ye will not say so; and cheer her up. That's sensible."

Fitzgerald give a slight backward touch to the cheque.

"No, thank you," said he (his face a little red). "I'm not in want of money, thank you all the same. What I

am in want of," he added, after a second, and with his eyes grown distant, "is some more certain employment. Then I would go back to Ireland, gladly enough, for a day or two. But this literary business is so difficult."

"Is it worse than pentin'?" the other demanded. "When have I had as much money as that at one time? Never in all my life! And sooner or later ye'll just drop on your feet like that; and not a mere chance, such as that is; but a settled thing; a permanency; and then I know fine what will happen. 'Whistle and I'll come to ye, my lad!' and it's a' smiles and white satin, and nervousness, and the laughing and joking of your friends; and if ye havena a jar o' good Scotch whisky for that day, then my name's not John Ross!"

"In the meantime," said Fitzgerald, looking a bit more cheerful, "I propose——"

"In the meantime, are you going to take the money?" said Ross, in his downright way. "Why not? I could not have got as much for them myself. And I have plenty to go on with."

"No," said Fitzgerald, hastily, "but I'll tell you what you can do, if you like. Next Saturday Mrs. Chetwynd is going down to Hastings until the Monday. Now on the Saturday we shall have a grand holiday, and you shall pay for everything, from the rising of the sun till the going down of the same—in fact, until we get back here."

"Most certainly—most certainly; but where are ye for going this time?"

"Down the Thames—all about the docks and wharves. I have not smelt tar, or stumbled over a rope, or had a chat with a captain, since I left the south of Ireland. And won't you see colour there, if the day is fine—the river, the barges, the ruddy sails——"

"It's done with ye," said Ross, decisively. "It's done with ye. And we'll get our dinner somewhere—if possible, in a place overlooking the river. We will find out some old-fashioned tavern—propped up on piles, maybe—with a buxom landlady in the bar, among the schiedam bottles and the silver—and the landlord coming in to us with a bottle o' Madeira forty years old—and sitting down, of course, and

having a crack wi' us. And then—but can ye keep a secret?"

"What is it?"

"Then, I'm thinking, my lad, when that bottle's opened, and mum's the word except for guesses; I'm thinking, without any breach of secrecy on your part, and without any impudence on mine; what do you say, then, if, when that bottle was opened, we were to drink a glass '*To the lass that's over the water*'?"

CHAPTER XVII.

AN APPARITION.

BUT it was not fated that Fitzgerald should go to the docks; the docks, or at least a representative of them, came to him. The following day, early in the afternoon, he was working away as industriously as usual, as industriously as if he had had no experience of the coyness or indifference of London publishers and editors. He was deeply intent on what he was about; and so, when he heard outside the preliminary tinkling of a banjo, and made sure he was about to be serenaded by a nigger-minstrel, he rose with much angry impatience and went to the door, not quite sure whether the best way to get rid of the man was to throw something to him, or to throw something at him.

When, however, he went outside, a most extraordinary scene was presented to him in the courtyard below. It was raining hard, to begin with. The nigger-minstrel seemed to be very drunk, and very merry; and he was not alone; for, backing from him, apparently in abject terror, was a singular-looking creature, whose face Fitzgerald could not see, but who wore a pilot-jacket much too big for him and a huge sou'-wester, and carried a large bundle slung over his shoulder by means of a stick. The farther that this little man and the big sou'-wester retreated—his gestures indicating a cowering fear—the nearer came this capering soot-faced idiot in the dress-coat, white breeches, and vast pink collar, singing snatches of doggerel, or begging for money with a sort of drunken facetiousness.

"Now, Paddy, a sixpence won't hurt ye—not a sixpence for the poor musician? A drop o' dog's-nose, Paddy—two-pennorth o' gin, then, old man——"

Then he twanged his banjo again, and capered and skipped, clearly enjoying the obvious fright of his victim.

"Where's your shillelagh, Paddy? Och, but ye're the broth of a boy. Not two-pennorth o' gin for the poor musician, Paddy?"

But the little man had retreated until he had reached the foot of the stairs; and could back no farther. In his desperation he shouted—

"Away wid ye! Away wid ye!"—and Fitzgerald suddenly fancied that the voice was familiar to him.

The nigger-minstrel was not to be balked of his drunken fun. He skipped and danced round his victim, poking at his face with his banjo. Then something desperate happened, all at once. The little man dropped his bundle, and, with the stick that had supported it in his hand, seemed to jump at his enemy like a wild-cat.

"Blood alive, but I'll bate your head in!" he yelled; and the next moment there was a battering of blows—that seemed all the more terrible, because most of them fell on the banjo with which the nigger was vainly defending himself. Fitzgerald thought it was high time to interfere.

"Here, you!" he called from the top of the stairs. "What are you doing there?"

The scrimmage ceased for a second as the little man looked up; then he uttered a slight cry. In three bounds he was up the stairs.

"Oh, Masther Willie, 'tis yoursilf at last!" he cried. "Glory be to God! Glory be to God, 'tis yoursilf at last, Masther Willie——"

But in his agitation Andy the Hopper could not get rid of his alarm; and a frightened glance told him that his enemy was also coming up the stairs.

"Away wid ye! Away wid ye, ye bligard! Oh, Masther Willie, what kind of man is that? Sure I thought he was the divil!"

"Did you never see a nigger-minstrel before?" said Fitzgerald, laughing; but keeping an eye on the musician.

"Well, if he isn't the divil, Andy, you'll have the divil to pay; for you've broken his banjo."

"And sarve the bligard right—the dirthy bligard!" said Andy, who was much braver now, with Master Willie in front of him. "Sure I tould him I'd bate him, and I did—the bligard!"

But the minstrel was no longer facetious; nor was he irate either. He was morose. He contemplated the smashed strings of the banjo with a gloomy air. Then he tried to get Fitzgerald to believe that this savage Paddy had attacked him; and when Fitzgerald remarked that he had seen the affair from the beginning, the complaint dwindled down into a lachrymose petition for some compensation. Would the gentleman look at what had been done to his hat and his wig? Would the kind gentleman give a poor man a drop o' something to drink, to keep out the rheumatics? At last he went away, pacified with a shilling; but after Fitzgerald and his new companion had gone inside and shut the door, they heard an extraordinary burst of shrill laughter in the courtyard below, as if the departing minstrel had just remembered again the joke he had played off on the frightened Paddy.

"Well, Andy, sit down and tell me what has brought you to London."

But Andy was quite bewildered. His delight at seeing the young master again; the fright of his encounter with the black creature; the strangeness of this big, bare apartment—these seemed to deprive him of speech. And then he uttered an exclamation—

"Oh, mother o' Moses, if the bligard hasn't taken my bag!"

"What bag, Andy?"

"The bag wid the shnipes, and the tale, and the hares. Sure the sight of your face, Masther Willie, has dhrew away my sinses——"

"You must have left it down below—go and see."

Andy quickly moved to the door; and then as suddenly paused.

"Sure, Masther Willie, axin' your pardon, would ye come too?"

Fitzgerald burst out laughing; but he went to the top of the stairs.

"The fellow's gone, Andy; you need not be afraid. And so is your bag, I imagine."

But to Andy's great delight he found the bag, which had been kicked past the corner of the building during the scuffle, and so had escaped observation when they were retiring from the scene of the fight. And a very heavy bag it was—this waterproof sack which Andy the Hopper, having removed his sou'-wester and his big pilot-jacket, proceeded to open. There were snipe, and teal, and golden plover, and what not, and there were three splendid plump brown hares. It seemed quite natural to see this little red-haired leprechaun-looking Andy on his knees sorting out the game.

"And where did all these come from, Andy?"

"Sure, some from the bog; and some from the mountain," answered Andy, imperturbably.

"And who shot them?"

"Is it who shot them? Who would be afther shooting them but mesilf, your honour?"

"And who gave you leave to shoot the mountain?"

"Lave?" said Andy, looking up with a quite honest stare of the small clear blue eyes. "There's no one'd be axing for lave to shoot a shnipe or a hare for yer honour. Yerra, who'd be axing for lave?"

"Oh, Andy, Andy!" said Fitzgerald. "What have you been after?"

For now, indeed, as Andy, with a little hesitation, drew out a brace of fine-plumaged pheasants, and stroked their feathers down, and smoothed out their long tails, even Andy seemed a little bit self-conscious.

"Oh, Andy, what have you been up to?"

"Thrue for you, sir," said Andy, looking very matter-of-fact, "it isn't often thim kind o' birds comes about the mountain——"

"The mountain! Do you mean to say you shot these pheasants up the mountain?"

"It isn't often them kind o' birds comes about the mountain——" said Andy, vaguely.

"You stole them out of Lord Kinsale's coverts, I know you did."

"Auh! To hear the like o' that now! Shtalin'! Was I ever afther shtalin' when I was out wid you, Masther Willie, on both bog and mountain, many's and many's the time? They're a foine brace o' birds, yer honour."

There was no denying that, at all events; and Andy avoided further discussion, or confession, by proceeding to carry the game to the adjacent table, where he laid out the beautifully-plumaged birds brace by brace, just as he used to do on the kitchen-dresser at Inisheen, after Master Willie and he had come back from the mountain. And then he was invited to come and sit by the fire and light his pipe; the while the young master went and got a pint bottle of ale and a tumbler for him. It was not the first time that these two had had a chat together.

It appeared, then, from Andy's narrative, that a gentleman of the name of Tim Sullivan, who had married Andy's cousin Bridget, had laid under some obligation the captain of a trading-smack called the *Molly Bawn*, who, in turn, had offered in return to Mr. Sullivan a free passage to London—or, at least, to Limehouse—whenever he chose to make the trip. This Mr. Sullivan seemed to be a person of wide and ambitious views; for, though he could not avail himself of this offer to see the world—owing to his wife being ill, and he having to look after the pigs—he did not wish to have it thrown away; and so he had come to Andy the Hopper and put the chance before him.

"He says to me, 'Andy, would ye like to see London now?' 'Divil a bit,' says I, 'but it's Masther Willie I'd like to see.' 'Sure,' says he, ''tis the great chance for ye. For what can a gintleman do in London without a sarvint?' says he. 'Baithershin,' says I. 'Whose sarvint?' 'Whose?' says he. 'Who but Mr. Fitzgerald?' 'Begor,' says I, 'but 'tis the divil's own cleverness ye've got, Tim Sullivan! for who'd have thought of that now?'"

"But you don't mean to say you've come all the way from Inisheen, Andy, to try your luck in London as a man-servant?"

"Well, Masther Willie," said Andy, scratching his red

hair with much perplexity, "not in a gineral kind of a way; but if it was yoursilf, sorr——"

Fitzgerald glanced round the apartment.

"Does this look as if I needed a man-servant, Andy?"

Now there is very little doubt that Andy the Hopper had been possessed with the conviction that Master Willie, having gone away to make his fortune, would be living in grand style; but his notions of grandeur were vague; and in any case, was this all of the house that belonged to the young master? Fitzgerald had gently to explain to him that these visions that Mr. Sullivan had awakened were not practical; and he was very much pleased to hear that Andy could get a free passage back in about ten days' time, and also that one of the hands on board the smack had got him a lodgment at Limehouse. Nor was Andy so greatly disappointed. He had always been accustomed to take Master Willie's advice as something that there was no contesting; and he quickly fell in with the notion that, now he was here, the best thing he could do was to see as much of London as he could, that he might be a great person when he got back to Inisheen.

"How you ever got here I don't understand," Fitzgerald said.

"Sure, thin, your honour, 'twas one of the boys that tould me the river went all the way through the town, from ind to ind, and says he, 'keep to the shtrame, and ask the people from toime to toime.' 'Tis iver since the morning I've been at it; but glory be to God, I found ye at last, Masther Willie; and that's the best part av the story they'll be wanting to hear about, when I get back to Inisheen."

"Well, now, Andy, begin and tell me all the news. Were there many cock about this winter? Was my father out shooting any time?"

Thus invited, the little impish-looking red-haired man, sucking away at a short clay pipe the while, began to tell all that had happened since Master Willie had left Inisheen; and very far and wide did these rambling reminiscences extend. It is impossible to say how interesting these were to Fitzgerald; and yet on one point, the most interesting of all, Andy had nothing to say, and he dared not ask.

What, indeed, could Andy know? Miss Romayne had not been back to Inisheen since she had left it shortly after his own leaving, and Andy's visits to Cork were the rarest things in his life—otherwise it is quite possible he might there have made himself familiar with the appearance of a nigger-minstrel. How could he know anything about Kitty; and yet the charm of all this news to Master Willie was that it spoke to him of the neighbourhood where he and Kitty had been together.

At last, this became too tantalising.

"Andy," says he, "do you remember the young lady that came down to Inisheen, and stayed in Widow Flanagan's house for a time?"

"Faix I do," said Andy, with a facetious grin. "Sure I remimber well enough the poor gyurl your honour made a fool of."

He flushed resentfully. But how could he complain of this familiarity? He had brought it on himself by his injudicious questioning. And then, no doubt, Andy considered this a little bit of astute flattery to regard the young master as a gay Lothario.

"She did not break her heart though ye did lave her, Masther Willie, and that's thrue," he added, with another pull at the pipe.

"How do *you* know? How do *you* know anything about her?" said Fitzgerald, angrily.

"'Twas Corney Malone," continued Andy, with the composure of indifference—for he doubtless thought this was but as another of his items of news—"was up at Cork, to see his daughter Biddy and the two boys—that's Pathrick with the squint eye and young Corney—he was afther seeing them away to Americay—and sure, your honour, that's the way wid em all now, and soon there'll be nobody left in the counthry but the gossoons and the ould women—and when he came back to Inisheen he was in the kitchen at the Impayrial, and says he, 'Sure the foine young lady that Masther Willie was sportin' about wid hasn't broken her heart for his laving of her.' 'What d'ye mane, Corney?' says I, for I was in the kitchen too—if it was not for a shnipe or two, or a mallard mebbe, how could a poor man

earn his living, your honour?—and says I, 'Corney, what d'ye mane?' 'Faix,' says he, ''tis another one now she's sportin' about wid—a young spark from Dublin.'"

For a moment to Fitzgerald the world seemed to whirl round; a kind of blackness came before his eyes; life was slipping away from him. But the next instant there was a backward rush—of contempt and indignation.

"Who the devil told you to bring your kitchen gabble here?" he said, in a tone that made Andy drop his pipe.

Then he was deeply mortified with himself. As if it was of the slightest consequence what reports might be going about Kitty in Inisheen or elsewhere! And was it not shameful that he should have allowed himself to be startled? He instantly assumed a forcedly tranquil air; and said, quite good-naturedly—

"Well, Andy, I suppose there isn't much doing just now in Inisheen; no doubt the people about the Imperial are glad to have things to talk about, however foolish they may be——"

"Thrue for you, sorr," said Andy, contentedly; he seemed quite unaware of having caused any quick pang of dismay.

"Mr. Corney Malone has been putting a lot of nonsense in your head," said Fitzgerald, presently. "I suppose he is vexed because the young lady did not buy any ribbons or pocket-handkerchiefs at his shop—things that he buys in Cork and sells to you Inisheen people at double the price."

"The divil sweep him!" said Andy, with heartfelt satisfaction: it was enough for him that Master Willie had declared against Corney Malone.

He invited Andy to continue his gossip; but that was less interesting now. He scarcely listened. He was thinking of Kitty's letters—the very breathings of her soul; could any one who had read these charming, inconsequent, affectionate prattlings doubt the honesty of her who had written them? It was at himself he was wondering. Why should he have felt, for even a second, this blackness of death grip his heart? It was for this, then, that she had given him the great treasure of her love—that, at the first idle tale, he should imagine it possible for her to be a

common flirt? What Hilton Clarke had said, then, was true? She should not have been left alone? Perhaps she also had the "unappeasable heart"? Perhaps he was ready to believe that the little shoots of tenderness had already gone out to cling to somebody else? Thus it was, that while Andy the Hopper was giving a religiously accurate account of the sayings and doings of everybody in Inisheen, Master Willie—fighting for poor Kitty, who was so far away—was proving to himself that he had never deserved to have her love, or he would not have allowed that foolish rumour to have dealt him such a blow.

Still, he wished to get out into the open air.

"Andy," said he, looking at his watch, "I have an engagement now; but I shall be back by a quarter-past seven. You can't go away down to Limehouse to-night; you would never get there. I will see if the landlady here can get you a bed for the night somewhere; and you'll want some supper. Wait here till I come back."

"A word wid ye, your honour," said Andy, anxiously. "May I make so bould as to bolt the door when your honour's gone?"

"Oh yes, certainly. But there is no chance of the black gentleman coming back."

It was still raining out here in the dark night; and he put up his umbrella unconsciously; but there were not many objects he passed during his rapid walk up to Hyde Park Gardens that he noticed or could have remembered. His thoughts were far away. Why should poor Kitty have been made the subject of idle rumours like these? What could Corney Malone know of her? Corney Malone was a small shopkeeper in Inisheen; apparently he had been unable to support his family or to procure work for them in the old country; so he had been drafting them off to America. And it was likely that, during that short visit to Cork, he should get to know anything of Miss Romayne! Even if he saw her walking with any one—which was absurd—how could he tell that the person was from Dublin? What would Kitty say when he should tell her—as he certainly should—that this bit of tittle-tattle, coming unexpectedly, had very nearly parted soul and body?

He recalled that sensation with a sort of shudder. It seemed as if the world were falling away from around him; and that he was blind. And all because Corney Malone, in the back-kitchen of the Imperial, had been chattering spiteful nonsense to the idlers about. Perhaps it was well for the symmetry of Mr. Malone's features—which was not much to boast of at the best—that he was not anywhere about Fitzgerald's neighbourhood just at this present moment.

He reached Hyde Park Gardens, and set to work to get through the hour mechanically. Fortunately that was easy; for he had brought with him a newly-published volume of Arctic travel, which was exceedingly interesting, and was making much stir; and he had had time to mark the salient passages. How strange it was to read of that far white land; and to see behind it, all the time, the harbour and the hills of Inisheen! It was Inisheen he was thinking of; not Cork. He did not like to think of the streets of Cork. And then, all of a sudden, there sprang into his recollection a phrase in one of Kitty's letters, written long ago when she was in Dublin—"Willie, there's a man bothering me with bouquets." His face grew red. He stumbled on with his reading. But the redness of his face was caused by anger with himself that this recollection could annoy him. He had no time to argue the matter with himself; he was reading about the Arctic zone; sometimes Mrs. Chetwynd said "Poor fellows, how they must have enjoyed that Christmas feast," or "Dear me, that was a narrow escape;" and he had to read on and on, with the streets of Cork, instead of Inisheen, thrusting themselves in as a background to all his hurried, staccato, agonised thinking.

So glad he was when that hour of unimaginable torture was over; and he could rush out into the night to avoid the demons that were seeking to devour him! He would not face them; for he would not acknowledge their existence. He would not admit to himself that he could have any doubts of Kitty's love, her faith and honour. He hurried on his way; persuading himself that he was sorry for Andy's waiting there alone. It was kind of Dr. Bude to have interested himself in John Ross; and to have got

some friend to offer to take two more sketches. Ross must see Andy the Hopper; and make a drawing of him. Ross might make a little copy of it; and he would send that to Kitty to amuse her; to Kitty who was so lonely away up there on the hill. "Just tell them there's a poor girl in Ireland, who is breaking her heart for your sake"—that was what she had written. As for any one sending her bouquets—why not? What more natural? They threw them to her on the concert-stage; why not send them? She had not even seen the man. How could they know that Kitty was married already; that her vow had been registered in the unseen world; that her faithfulness had been celebrated in the great hall where the little people sounded their silver gongs, and the care of "Catherine" was given over to them? He knew and she knew; that was enough; the outside world might go its way. "Let this be a love night," Kitty had said, down by the running water; she could scarcely be got to repeat the curse; she knew there never would be any occasion for that. And to speak of poor Kitty as having been jilted! Well, no matter. He and she knew; the little ringlets round her ears had heard their secrets; the outside world might go its way.

From these dreams, that seemed to grow brighter and brighter the faster he walked, he was awakened by his arrival at his lodging, and the necessity of supplying Andy with some supper and a bed in the neighbourhood. There was no difficulty about either. At supper (John Ross could not be found, or he would have been invited to join), Andy insisted on observing the etiquette of the luncheons on the mountain. That is to say, he would wait about until the young master had finished—helping now and again to hand things as well as he knew. Then, when he had followed, and disposed of a hasty meal, he had no objection to light a pipe and chat on the ordinary familiar terms.

But all the fascination had gone from Andy the Hopper's gossip. He found the young master sorely distraught; more than that, he seemed to become impatient from time to time, as though he could not bear having his thoughts disturbed.

"Sure, Masther Willie," said Andy at length, "there was nothing to vex ye in the sthory that Corney Malone brought back from Cork—bad luck to the omadhaun!——"

"Oh, hold your tongue, Andy!" said Fitzgerald, rising and going to the window. "It is still raining. See here, now. Will you be able to make your way back to Limehouse to-morrow?"

"Yerra, your honour, as I came here I can go back!"

"If there's any sun you can make straight south till you meet the river. If there isn't, ask the nearest way. Then you'll find yourself near Chelsea pier; and the boat will take you down. Can you remember that, now?"

"Sure we'll shpake of it in the marnin, your honour," said Andy, who was very comfortable now by the fire.

"I shan't see you in the morning," said Fitzgerald, briefly. "I am going away from London for a day or two——"

"The Lord be marciful to us, Masther Willie; but is it bad news ye've got?"

"No, no. I am coming back in a day or two—long before the *Molly Bawn* can get in her cargo. I'll find you out at Limehouse; and bring you back here. I'll have your portrait painted, Andy; but where's the jacket with the red sleeves?"

"Sure I thought if your honour wanted a sarvint, 'twasn't the ould jacket you'd be afther wishing to have about the house. But that was the jacket that tased the bull into the bog—d'ye mind that, Masther Willie?"

"Don't I!"

This resolution of his once taken—that, come what might, he would start by the Irish mail in the morning, and take the long journey to Cork, and seek out Kitty, just for a moment of holding her two shoulders and gazing into the beautiful, soft eyes—Andy's gossip seemed far more bearable. What was not bearable was that, amid all the vague thoughts conjured up by this aimless talking, now and again his heart should stop short suddenly, as if there was something he dared not face. He could not banish from him the consciousness that, however he might argue himself out of foolish doubt in the daytime, in the night

dark things would occupy his mind. And Kitty's eyes were so loving; they would have no reproach in them, if he went to her and asked her to help him to banish for ever this ghastly nightmare. Just to take her hand for a moment—that would be enough. Was it not the hand he had held over the little stream running down to the Blackwater and the sea?

CHAPTER XVIII.

STORM AND CALM.

This was a strange setting out to go and see Kitty. Where was the gladness of it? Why should there be fear, and a touch of shame, and a hundred horrible distractions and suggestions, instead of the simple joyousness of the thought that soon he would have Kitty's love-lit eyes regarding him? He had not slept much that night. Long before there was any need he had dressed and gone out, making his way to the station through the dark empty streets. In the cold railway-carriage he sat distraught; the spectacle of the gray dawn disclosing itself over the sleeping landscape had no interest for him. He was as one in a dream.

And then sometimes he would ask himself sharp and angry questions. Supposing this rumour to be true, had he not himself to blame? Why had he ever left Cork? What had the wretched ambition to play a part in literature to do with the happiness of his life? Why had he been content to live in a fool's paradise in London, when he ought to have been by Kitty's side? Was it not his place? But he must needs go and leave her alone—she young and tender-eyed, and wandering from one town to another. How could that fool of a woman be a proper guardian for her? And what more natural than that here or there some one should wish to pay Kitty some attention? she was so quick in sympathy; so gentle-hearted; with "her young eyes still wounding where they looked."

And then again he reproached himself for entertaining

for a moment the monstrous supposition that his faithful Kitty, who had sworn her love to him over the brook on that wonderful moonlit night, should encourage the attentions of any one. And how was he going to approach her? How make an excuse for appearing in Audley Place? Should he play the spy, then? This was a strange setting out to go and see Kitty.

But when he got near to Holyhead the first glimpse of the sea made his heart leap up. Had not these gloomy fancies and forebodings been the product of a town life? The cold sea-air seemed to drive them away. Of course he should meet Kitty as of old; and they would talk about Inisheen; and if the winter roads were rather too muddy for country walks, they would be quite content with the wide pavements of the town, and would be happy enough in the South Mall, or in St. Patrick's Street, or the Mardyke Parade. Kitty's warm little hand would be on his arm. They would talk about their future life together. Would she look up trustingly, or look down shyly, when he told her of the quaint little house by the river with its woodwork of white and green?

He grew so hopeful that he had even time to think of John Ross; and to wish that he were also on board this great steamer. Would not these wonders be sufficient for him? For at one moment they were slowly steaming through a fog that was suffused with a yellow sunlight—the fog-horn booming and answering similar warnings from ships that were invisible—and then again they would suddenly emerge into a perfectly clear space—the sea quite smooth and glassy and blue, perhaps some massive brig or heavy schooner lying motionless on the mirror-like surface, with all its idle sails accurately reflected. It was a tedious crossing on the whole. Sometimes they stole out from one of these encircling fogs to find another steamer, or motionless sailing vessel, most dangerously near. But before they reached Kingstown they had left the fogs completely behind them; and the sun was shining pleasantly on the harbour and the shipping and the houses, as if his native country were giving him a friendly and smiling welcome.

In the long journey, moreover, away to the south, he had distraction in the society of a middle-aged priest, a person of meagre aspect and of sallow complexion, who had gray eyes with black eyebrows and eyelashes. Fitzgerald very soon found that these gray eyes were capable of expressing a good deal of passionate feeling—especially anger. The priest was a perfervid politician; and his language was far from temperate. Now Fitzgerald was scarcely a politician at all. The *Cork Chronicle* had not seen fit to take the affairs of the Empire under its care. At Inisheen, again, he had generally preferred to the Tim or Pat who skulked out of the town for midnight drill (frightening away the wild-fowl, besides), the Tim or Pat who worked contentedly at his little farm, and had a pleasant "Good morrow" for the passer-by, and knew whereabouts a hare was to be found. He had his doubts about the wonderful magic to be wrought by "Repeal;" and had a vague sort of belief that, even under the present system, an Irishman, if he condescended to work, had just as good a chance of getting on as a Scotchman or an Englishman. It will be seen that these were not very definite convictions; and this good Father got himself into white heat in showing Fitzgerald how shameful it was of an Irishman to be so indifferent. Fitzgerald took no shame to himself. Politics had not been much in his way. A young man who has to earn his own living must think of that first before proceeding to look after the affairs of the country (unless, indeed, he is the younger son of a nobleman, when he may have an opportunity of accomplishing the former at the expense of the latter), and though Fitzgerald was quite willing to listen to this impassioned clerical—and rather glad, perhaps, to have the tedium of the long railway journey so relieved—it was not to be expected that he should suddenly acquire an intense interest in party strife. Indeed it may afford an illustration of certain influences that had been at work on him to say that while the priest was denouncing the action of the Government as having been the direct and obvious cause of Irish disaffection, Fitzgerald, regarding the gray eyes, was wondering whether any colour or any artistic skill

could convey to canvas the curious light that glowed there.

But as they drew nearer and nearer to Cork—it was now the middle of the night—neither political discussion nor artistic contemplation was sufficient to distract his mind. He scarcely heard what the good man said. He assented to anything. He was thinking of his meeting with Kitty in the morning; and his heart was heavy with fear—fear of he scarcely knew what. It was so strange that he should be afraid of meeting Kitty! Would she believe that? Would she see it? What explanation could he make?

Then he thought of her recent letters. It is true that, once or twice, she had seemed to grow despondent, and perhaps even a little bit tired of waiting; but for the most part she had written as cheerfully and kindly as ever. What reason, then, could he give for this sudden visit? Could he confess to her that he had formed suspicions of her—and that on the authority of a rumour brought by such a messenger as Andy the Hopper?

"You don't believe my letters, then," would she not say? "You consider I have been playing the hypocrite? My affection for you was a pretence. You cannot trust what I say; you have to come over and see for yourself; it is thus you recognise the sacredness of the vow that we swore in the glen? That is the importance you yourself attach to it; that it is so slight a tie it can have melted away already; you come over to see who it is that has so soon come between us two!"

How could he withstand the reproachful look of Kitty's eyes? How could he show to her how weak had been his faith in her? If it were so easily snapped on so slight a strain, how could it withstand the rougher usage, the long wear and tear of the world?

But then Kitty was so honest and so kind; if he were quite frank with her, and told her that his better reason knew how groundless these fears were, and that only to show himself how absurd they were had he taken this long journey—if he were to throw himself on her mercy—if he were to say, "Kitty, laugh at me as you like; but lonely

living in London has weakened my nerves; and I can't hear anything about you but my heart jumps; so here I am, just to have a look at you, and to laugh at myself, if you like, for my idle fright." Would Kitty laugh? Not she. She was too kind for that. Her warm and gentle heart had no malice in it at all. She would say, "Then look at me. Look down into my eyes. Can you find anything but love, and truth, and constancy?"

On arriving at Cork, he went to the Imperial Hotel; it was between two and three in the morning. He was very tired, and he slept well. On awaking, he could not understand where he was—for a second; the next second his heart almost stood still: he had to face Kitty.

Then, if so, the sooner the better. When he went out into the wide thoroughfares on this quiet Sunday morning, they were shining just as cheerfully in the sunlight as on that former Sunday morning when his life seemed to be rejoicing within him at the thought of his climbing the steep little thoroughfare at the top of which Kitty lodged. Now he kept his eyes about him, as if people might be watching him. Would they know what had brought him to Cork? There might be a friend of Kitty's somewhere about who would wonder to see him. Perhaps—— But no; he could not consider that possible.

And yet it was wonderful to him that perhaps so late as even yesterday Kitty had been looking at these very quays and boats; and had crossed this bridge; and had been opposite yonder house. That was the interest of the scene to him; John Ross's teaching was forgotten; he was not thinking of the colour of the sea, or of the greens and grays and whites of this steep little thoroughfare. He had scarcely a look for Shandon tower, when he had climbed the hill; he did not notice the hoar-frost on the ground where the sun had not reached it; nor the extent of wintry landscape, with its leafless trees and hedges. He only knew that not a soul was visible along the little terrace; and that he dared not go near the house. He must see Kitty alone, and here.

He waited and waited; walking this way and that, but not passing the house. The clock in Shandon tower over

there struck half-past ten; but still she did not come. Why should she? No country walks were possible now; no doubt the wet weather had left the lanes full of mud. And if she were not to stir forth at all—bright as the morning happened to be?

Then the whole aspect of the world changed; Kitty was there. The day seemed fuller and richer; delight took possession of him; he lost fear. Kitty did not see him at first; she looked abroad over the country as she came down to the little iron gate; and as she came along he noticed that she carried a prayer-book in her hand.

"Kitty!"

She looked up—with something of fear, as he thought, in her startled glance.

He seized her hands, and kissed her.

"You are not glad to see me, then?" he said, cheerfully.

"Well, but—but—" she said, "—but nothing has happened?"

"Nothing," said he. "I have come to see you, that is all."

"You have given me a great fright," said she, and she was still a little pale. "Why did you not write to me? What is the meaning of it?"

He was so delighted with regarding her—the pretty outline of her cheek and chin—the soft, timid blackness of her eyes—the bits of curls that were around her small ears—that he scarcely heard what she said.

"You have not altered a bit, Kitty," said he in his gladness. "You are just as much my Kitty as ever—and ever so much nicer to look at than your portrait. It hasn't been satisfactory, Kitty, trying to get that portrait to speak to me of an evening, when I was quite alone. It looked at me; but not as you look now. But still—why do you look so—so—so—— Kitty, are you not glad to see me?"

"Well, of course," said she, but not with the greatest cordiality. "You need not have frightened me. It is a Jack-in-the-box kind of way of coming to see one. Why did you not write?"

"Well, the surprise——" He could not tell her the

truth; nay, there was happily no need for him to tell it her. He had looked in her eyes; that was enough.

"And the cost, too, I suppose," said she. "Do you think it is very wise, Willie, to throw away money like that? I did not understand you were getting on so very well."

He stared at her in astonishment; not hurt nor vexed, but simply wondering.

"Kitty, you talk as if you really were not glad that I have come to see you. You don't talk like my Kitty at all!"

"Of course I am glad," she said. "But people can't always have what they like. I really don't see that it is wise to go throwing away money on these constant trips—especially in the case of people whose future doesn't look over bright."

"Constant trips, Kitty! This is the second since I went to London; and the first was eight or nine months ago——"

"But what is the use of it?"

"There is no use in it—there is no use in it, Kitty," said he, rather bewildered. "And if I had thought that this was to be my reception——"

"Oh, but we are not going to quarrel," said she, with something more of her ordinary kindness in her manner. "If you have been extravagant, we must make the best of it. I am going to church; I suppose you will come with me."

She put her hand in his arm, in the old familiar way; he could not but take it and pat it.

"I will go to church with you, if you like, Kitty; but might we not have a walk and a chat instead? There must be a lot to say after such a long separation."

"We cannot walk about," she said, "the roads are too wet. Besides I told Miss Patience I was going to church. And besides," she added, with a little laugh, "we have not been quite idle in letter-writing, Willie; there cannot be so very much to say."

"Oh, very well, Kitty. I will go to church with you; I don't care much where we go, so long as I am by your side. And when you have been to church, Kitty, you will be a little more gentle and civil in your manner."

"But I am gentleness and civility itself!" she remonstrated. "It is you who are reckless and wild. You don't care what any freak costs you. I believe I was mad when I engaged myself to you."

"No use saying that now, Kitty, it is past praying for."

"I suppose so."

They were on much more friendly terms now. Perhaps Kitty had only resented her having been frightened. It was quite like old times for them to be walking arm-in-arm; and the bell in Shandon tower was tolling; and the people were coming along the various thoroughfares to the church.

"By the way," said he, "we have never settled in what church we shall be married, Kitty."

"That's being rather too particular. That's looking rather too far forward, isn't it?"

"I am not so sure about that," said he.

"You have discovered the gold mine, then? Is that what you came to tell me about, Willie?" she said, with an odd kind of smile.

But they were entering the church porch; and there was no possibility for further speech. Sitting there beside her, indeed, he did not complain of the enforced silence. To be near her was enough; to have tight hold of her hand; to hear the sweet voice join in the singing. Perhaps he did not listen too attentively to the service or the sermon. Dreams of what the world might hold for him and her together would come in from time to time. The imaginations and ambitions of youth are stimulated rather than retarded by the hushed and mysterious repose of a sacred building; the vague dim background is convenient for the painting of wonderful pictures. And it seemed to him that that beautiful future, which he could adorn and colour at will, had once more and suddenly been presented to him. These horrible doubts had been left behind. They vanished when he took Kitty's hand in his. There was no need for explanation or confession; Kitty and he were together again; life had grown full again of joy and hope. And London, with its struggles and mortifications, and disappointments, was also forgotten. Shandon church,

with Kitty's hand in his, left him no memories of the Fulham Road. It was as if it had only been the other night that he and she pledged their vows to each other over the running stream.

When they came out again she said—

"Now you will come and have some dinner with us, Willie; and you must try and be civil to Miss Patience."

"I would rather go for a walk, Kitty," said he. "We have said nothing to each other yet."

"What is there to say that we have not said before?" she answered, somewhat saucily, "or that we can't say in letters?"

"Your letters are very nice, Kitty, but they don't speak as well as your eyes."

"Oh, I assure you," she said, gravely, "I am going to take my eyes with me wherever I go. Don't be afraid. I shall have my eyes as much with me when we are sitting down at the table as if we were wandering through these muddy lanes."

No, she would not be persuaded. She thought there would not even be time for a stroll down to the river-side and back. It was too cold for walking. She was rather tired.

"Tired!" said he, in amazement; "what can have tired you?"

"You are so pertinacious," she said, with a touch of impatience. "You want to argue. You want explanations. When I tell you I am tired, isn't that enough?"

"Well, yes, it is enough," said he, gently. "And I think you must be tired."

The subtlety of this reproof reached her. She coloured a little.

"I want to be kind to you; but you're always quarrelling!" she said.

And then she laughed; and looked so pretty, and confused, and merry, all at once, that he could have kissed her there and then, though all Cork might stare.

"I declare it's enough to put anybody out of temper," said she, with all her ordinary frankness and audacity. "Here am I supposed to be cultivating the greatest

admiration for somebody who is away in London, working hard on my account. It is so self-denying, don't you see; and you ought to remember the absent; and all the rest of it. And all at once he turns up on a holiday trip!—frightening you to begin with; and not a word of excuse or reason."

"I have quite sufficient reason, Kitty," said he. "The delight of listening to your impertinence is quite enough."

"I am not impertinent at all; I am talking common sense—and that's a thing you don't know much about, Master Willie. The fact is, these people at Inisheen spoiled you. You think you should have everything you want; now, that isn't quite possible in this fine world."

"Kitty, you have been studying the Poor Man's Annual, or whatever the book is. You are fearfully wise this morning. This is the second time you have informed me that people can't get everything they want; and the truth of the aphorism is more remarkable than its novelty——"

"Oh dear me, is that the way we talk in London?" said she.

"There's only one thing I want," said he, not heeding her; "and I've got it hard and fast."

"But you need not break my fingers with your arm. I shan't be able to practise to-morrow. What is that in your breast-pocket that hurts so?"

"That?" said he. "It would be odd if that could hurt anybody. It's your portrait, Kitty. I had a case made for it."

"Let me see it."

He took out the case and showed it her; she only looked at the outside.

"Well, I do declare! the extravagance! And this is the way we are supposed to be saving money in London—buying anything that touches our fancy, or rattling away on a holiday? That is just like you Irish people. I see more and more of it every day. You can deny yourselves nothing. You must always spend more than you've got; and then expect the Government to keep you——"

"Who has been giving you lessons in political economy, Kitty?" he said, as he took the case from her, and put it

in another pocket. "'You have become fearfully practical——"

"That's what you will never be," she said, with a little sigh—real or affected.

"I did not think you would consider that much of an extravagance," said he, "getting a nice cover for your photograph."

"But coming away over here——"

"That seems quite to distress you——"

"Oh dear no," she said—they were now going up to the door of the house, and she spoke in a more matter-of-fact way. "Perhaps I ought to be glad. It shows you can afford it."

As he entered the little passage, he caught a glimpse of a female figure flying upstairs; then Kitty asked him to go into the adjacent parlour, and wait till she had put off her things; then he was left alone.

This meeting with Kitty had not been like that other meeting that he so clearly remembered. Then she had clung to him, crying; she had begged of him never to leave her again; she had offered to live on nothing rather than that he should go away from her. Now she had grown so practical; she seemed to wish him back in London; it was the cost of his visit, not the surprise and delight of it, that seemed to occupy her mind. But still, here he was in the little chamber that was so familiar; there was Kitty's piano, and the dishevelled mass of music that she never would keep in order; there were the books he had sent her (he knew better than to look whether the edges were cut; disappointments come easily enough without people hunting after them); there was the crystal paper-weight in which Kitty had put his photograph, saying the while, "Well, so long as that is before me while I am writing, I guess I shall look sharp after my grammar. I can see the scowl beginning already. '*None of your impertinence, Miss. Can't you spell the English language yet? You think that is clever, do you?*' So there's a place for you, Mr. Schoolmaster Killjoy; and when I want a scolding I'll come for it."

The little maid-servant came in and laid the cloth; and then Miss Patience appeared.

Miss Patience received him with much placid civility. She seemed more mysterious and hawk-like than ever, and seemed to take it for granted that he, having been so much longer in London, should know proportionately more of the secret things going on in politics. Fitzgerald had to explain to her that he had had but little to do with politics; even the one editor he had met in London, he had not seen since last he had visited Cork.

"I heard you were not succeeding," remarked Miss Patience, calmly.

"Succeeding!" he exclaimed with a sort of start (for he had not looked at his struggles in London in that way). "Well, I have been trying many things; and it is impossible to say whether this or that may succeed. I cannot expect everything at once. There are many openings in literary and newspaper work; of course one must wait. I can't say I have either succeeded or not succeeded."

"Ah," said Miss Patience, complacently. "That is all so unlike commerce. Commerce is secure. Just think of sending a telegram to Odessa—a few words; you get a reply back the same day; you walk down to the Exchange and buy something; and you have earned £2000. Two thousand pounds!—with so little trouble——"

But here Kitty came in; and she had dressed so prettily and neatly! He could not help regarding her with admiring looks; and Miss Kitty was a little bit shy and conscious; and so they sat down to this middle-day dinner —London, black phantoms, and disappointments, all shut out and forgotten.

"It seems to me, Kitty," said he, lightly, "that a commercial spirit has come over this neighbourhood since I was here last. You have been lecturing on political economy all the morning; and now Miss Patience tells me how easy it is to make £2000 by merely sending a telegram to Odessa. It appears to me that it might be just as easy to lose £2000 by the use of the same machinery."

Kitty glanced at Miss Patience with a sort of apprehensive look he could not understand.

"I was observing to Mr. Fitzgerald that I was sorry he had not been successful in London," answered that lady, calmly.

"And I was saying that I had neither been successful nor non-successful," said Fitzgerald, cheerfully. "Of course there are a great many things to be tried——"

"Oh, of course, of course," said Kitty, hastily, and with a touch of colour in her face. "Of course Miss Patience meant so far only—only so far. We know that it is difficult to—to—to succeed in literature—of course Miss Patience quite understands——"

If Miss Patience understood, Fitzgerald did not. Why this embarrassment; and this talk about the advantages of commerce; and this assumption that he had tried literature in London as a means of livelihood and failed?

Miss Patience said with a gentle smile—

"But when once you have that commercial machinery of which you speak, Mr. Fitzgerald, how nice that must be! It goes on making money for you; you can go away and see the world; your agents are enough. That must be very nice, that independence and security. The literary man, even the most successful, is in so precarious a position. A tile from a roof knocks him senseless; his means of livelihood vanish. No one else can do his work for him; it is like an artist becoming blind; there is no machine that can go on independently of him to make money for his wife and children. Ah, there is nothing so safe as that. Commerce in a commercial country is a natural occupation. And it is so safe."

But was it so safe? argued Fitzgerald, somewhat hotly—though he scarcely knew why, for certainly commerce had never done him any harm. If it were so safe and natural and easy to make £2000 by telegraphing to Odessa, wouldn't everybody be at it? Then look at the common failures. Look at the multitude of commercial men, who were living on the very edge of bankruptcy. It was all very well to have such a piece of machinery as that that had been mentioned, but what if it happened to work the wrong way? What if it came back, and burst you? No doubt it was a good thing if the commercial man could lay by a provision for his wife and children; but could not the successful man of letters do that too? And as for the tile from the roof, where would the commercial man be

if that hit him? Accidents were always possible. What was not possible was that life should be based on idle calculations. And, success or no success, machinery or no machinery, as for himself, he said proudly, he would rather earn the plainest living by literature than revel in all the riches that could be procured from Odessa or anywhere else.

Kitty was the peacemaker.

"Oh yes, no doubt," said she (though she seemed anxious to get away from the subject altogether). "One would like to be what you say—I mean, it must be a great thing to be a great man of letters—but there are so few—and it must be so difficult. I am sure that all Miss Patience meant was that it must be nice to have a business going on that leaves you free and gives you no anxiety——"

"I should say there were very few of those," said he. "Leave a business and it leaves you—the proverb is common among business men themselves. You wake up some fine morning and find yourself a bankrupt."

"Ah, very well," said Kitty, with a sigh, "those at least are very well off who begin life with a fortune ready made for them, and have no anxiety about it."

"I don't know that," said he; "the enjoyment of life is work. I don't see that people who are securely rich are any the happier for it. And I should not think much of the woman whose views of life were coloured by the presence or absence of money."

This was getting more serious. Kitty said, with a pleasant laugh—

"There is not much use in our talking about it anyway; for all the money that you and I have, Willie, or are likely to have, won't make nations fight about us. I want you to tell Miss Patience about all the people you have seen in London. And is that old lady really so nice as you say? And what part of Bantry Bay is the house you told me of, that her nephew had? I looked in a map for Boat of Garry, but could see nothing of it; I suppose it is a small place."

So there was nothing further said about the advantages

of commerce over literature—or the reverse; and presently Fitzgerald found himself being drawn by the humour of the situation into giving Miss Patience such dark hints about the ways and manners of the great politicians then in power as would no doubt have astonished those much-canvassed persons. Kitty seemed greatly relieved; she listened pleasantly; content reigned over the modest banquet. And as for Fitzgerald, it was of little account to him what nonsense he talked or listened to, so long as Kitty was in the room. Miss Patience was treated with the gravest respect; from time to time he could steal a glance at Kitty's eyes.

The middle-day dinner was long over, and they had gathered round the fire, when a step was heard on the little pathway outside, and then a loud knock at the door. Kitty started, and looked apprehensively at Miss Patience. There was an absolute silence; then some sounds in the passage; and presently the maid-servant appeared.

"Mr. Cobbs, Miss."

Fitzgerald was fairly stupefied when he saw this young man come into the room with the air of one who was perfectly acquainted with both Kitty and Miss Patience. He had never heard a word of him. Who could he be? The next moment he found himself being introduced to the stranger; and these two regarded each other with scrutiny, though the new-comer had the advantage in calmness. He took a chair; put his hat and cane on the table; and asked Kitty if she had been to church that morning.

He was apparently about twenty or one-and-twenty; stout, rather; of middle height; with a fair complexion and close-cropped yellow hair; he was dressed in the extreme of fashion; and his hands and feet were small. Anybody else would have said he was an ordinary-looking, good-looking, well-dressed young man—with perhaps too obvious a taste for jewellery; what Fitzgerald thought of him, and of the circumstances, need not be put down here.

In truth, he was too bewildered to have any clear notion of what he was thinking. But he knew that, whatever the truth of the matter, he could not openly insult Kitty by

presuming that anything was wrong. He resolved to be quite courteous to this stranger. Why should not an idle young gentleman pay an afternoon call? He resolved to be quite courteous; and clenched his hands behind his back to keep him in remembrance.

Kitty, who appeared to have lost her usual self-confident, half-satirical manner, seemed extraordinarily eager to get these two to talk together. Mr. Fitzgerald had just come over from London: had Mr. Cobbs been in London recently? Both seemed inclined to talk to her or to Miss Patience, but not to each other; and the embarrassment of the situation was obviously increasing when Fitzgerald determined to end it. He saw his poor little sweetheart frightened and troubled; and he could not have that. With much frankness he began to speak to this new-comer; and as men find politics their common ground of conversation, he asked Mr. Cobbs if he had noticed any symptoms of disaffection since his stay in the country. Now this was a friendly overture; but the young man with the fat fair face and the blank gray eyes chose to be rather uncivil. He began to say things about Ireland and the Irish—which was not quite fair, seeing that there were three English people to one Irishman. Moreover he talked the ordinary nonsense that is talked by the well-fed, heavy-pursed Englishman who lays down economical laws about Ireland without any knowledge whatever of the people or of the agricultural conditions of the country. And he was a conceited creature; he liked to hear himself talk; his platitudes were dictatorial in tone.

Fitzgerald was getting wilder and wilder; but he kept his hands tightly clenched. And he would not answer this fellow at all. He spoke to these other two. He told them what he knew, what he had seen. He described the haggard denizens of the bog-land, living amid ague and starvation; he described the poor devils on the hillsides, trying to scrape a living off rocky soil not fit to support rabbits; and then, when the bit of sour bog-land had been slowly reclaimed, or the potatoes beginning to do a little better in the stone-walled enclosure, the agents stepping in to demand impossible rents, and the landlord, in London,

or Venice, or Monaco, knowing nothing about it and caring less; and then the eviction of whole families—the shivering wretches without a bit of firewood, let alone a bit of bread. And this was the system under which you hoped to get a loyal and contented peasantry! With the mass of the people believing that the landlords were leagued against them; that the law was against them; that the soldiers and the police were against them——

But indeed this is no place for a full exposition of the picture that Fitzgerald drew: it is enough to say that a few minutes had been sufficient to turn the Gallio whom the priest had remonstrated with into a politician as violent as the priest himself. Moreover, his vehement declarations were now addressed to Kitty; and Kitty timidly assented. She was staring into the fire; not at all in a contemplative mood.

"But why don't they go away?" said Miss Patience.

"God help them, they are going away," said he, "in thousands, though there's many a breaking heart leaving Queenstown Harbour. And it's the young ones that are going; and the old ones, who can do nothing, are left at home to starve."

"Well, if they can't earn a living they must suffer," said the young Englishman. "If you can't live you must die—it's the law of nature. All I know of them is that they're a set of mean snivelling wretches who will fawn upon you if you give them charity, and shoot you from behind a hedge the minute after."

"Only after you have given them charity? Then I should say you were pretty safe!" was the somewhat too fierce reply.

Clearly the air was becoming surcharged; and Miss Patience prudently left the room. What astounded Fitzgerald, however, most of all was that this young stranger seemed so much at home—so familiar with the apartment and its contents, and so familiar in his manner with Kitty. He sat down to the piano and opened it as if he had been quite accustomed to do that. He overhauled the music as if it were his own. And at last he said—as he carelessly ran his fingers up and down the keys—

"Won't you sing something, Miss Romayne, and let me play the accompaniment? Oh, I know what will tempt you."

He rose and went to the other end of the room and fetched a book of music back to the piano. He opened it; played a few bars, and then turned round.

"Won't that tempt you?"

"I would rather not sing," said Kitty, without looking up.

"Really? Oh yes, come along!"

"I would rather not sing," said Kitty again.

He turned to Fitzgerald—his fingers still wandering lightly over the keys.

"Do you play?" said he.

The question was innocent enough; but Fitzgerald considered it impertinent.

"No, I don't," said he. "I don't consider it man's work."

"That is because you can't do it, I suppose," said the other.

Now there was just a trifle too much of a sneer in this little speech. Fitzgerald rose, and passed him on the pretence of going to look out. As he passed he said, in a low and clear voice—

"I can't play the piano; but I can throw puppies out of the window."

Now whether this was meant exclusively for the young gentleman's ear or not cannot be said; but at all events, as he happened to cease playing for a moment, it sounded so distinctly that Kitty must have overheard it. Fitzgerald walked on to the window; shoved his hands in his pockets, and stared out. The young gentleman, after a second or two of silence, rose from the piano; took his hat and cane; and said to Kitty, with much formal politeness—

"Good afternoon, Miss Romayne. I shall do myself the pleasure of calling some other time when you are not occupied with visitors."

He left.

"Who is that fellow?" said Fitzgerald, turning angrily from the window.

"What fellow?" said Miss Romayne, with quite as much temper. "He is a gentleman. You have no right to insult him. He is as much entitled to civility in this house as you are. You have no right to insult him. A pretty opinion he will have taken away of you."

"I don't care about his opinion. I want to know what he is doing here."

"He called, like yourself," said she, stubbornly.

"Called? Yes. And his calling has made your name a byword!"

Her eyes flashed.

"Now I see! You have heard some miserable talking; and that is why you have come over so suddenly. Well, I am ready to be cross-examined. I will tell you what you want to know—if that is your purpose."

He looked at her; and knew her mood. It was not the first of their quarrels.

"We will take it that way," said he, coldly. "Who is the young gentleman, if one may be permitted to ask?"

"You have heard his name. He belongs to a firm of merchants in Liverpool."

"Oh, I perceive," exclaimed Fitzgerald, a light breaking in on him. "That accounts for the hymns of praise in favour of commerce——"

"I did not say a word about it," she said hotly. "If you want to insult Miss Patience also, call her in. We ought all of us to have a share of your politeness."

"But he is not looking after the machinery that turns out two thousand pounds in a few hours. He is not telegraphing to Odessa from Cork, is he?"

"How can I tell?"

"Do you know what he is doing in Cork?"

"He is travelling. He is on his way to Killarney."

"Killarney! Killarney at this time of the year! And how long has he been in Cork on his way to Killarney?"

"How can I tell?"

"Some time, however?"

"Yes. Some time."

"And he has called here several times?"

"Yes, he has; what harm is there in that?"

"Oh, I did not say there was any harm——"

"But why are you talking to me like that?" said she, and she threw the book she was holding on to the table. "I will not be spoken to like that! I have done nothing wrong. I will not be spoken to as if I were a child. It is you who ought to apologise. You have insulted a friend of mine under my own roof——"

"A friend?" said he, in the same cold way. "Have you come to that, then? But I thought you were willing to have a few questions asked, that was all."

"Yes, I am," said she—though rather sullenly. "You can find out what you like; and then see whether you have any right to come here with your insulting suspicions."

"Have I mentioned any suspicions?"

"You would not be here if you did not suspect me."

"I would like to know a little more about this young gentleman, Kitty."

"Very well."

"Where were you introduced to him — or were you introduced to him at all?"

"I *was* introduced to him," she said quickly, and with her cheeks burning. "I was introduced to him in Dublin."

"In Dublin! And so he has followed you all the way from Dublin?"

"How dare you say such a thing? He can travel where he pleases; he is well off. He may be here on business for anything I know."

"Oh no, Kitty, not on business; he is going to Killarney in the middle of winter! And isn't it strange that, since you've known him all the time since you were in Dublin, you never thought of mentioning his name in any of your letters to me?"

"I don't see anything strange in it," she said pertly. "I could not mention every trifle. I wrote of the things that were of real interest to you and me."

That phrase "you and me" rather softened him. His anger and indignation were fast oozing away. It was so pitiable to see Kitty standing before him there, with her eyes cast down, like a culprit.

"I should have thought," said he, in a more gentle way,

"I should have thought that anything that affected your good name would be of interest to you and me."

"If—if anybody," she said, with her lips becoming tremulous, "has been saying anything—anything against my good name, I did not expect it—it—it would be you, Willie——"

And here she broke into a passion of tears; and threw herself sobbing into his arms, and clung to him.

"Willie, there's nothing wrong; I cannot bear to have you speak like that to me. You break my heart. I would rather die than have you angry with me. There was nothing wrong, Willie—there is no harm in anything I have done—he—he is only a boy—and he was so good and kind when—when they gave me a benefit—and everybody spoke so well of him——"

"But why didn't you tell me all this before?" said he.

"It would only have worried you," she sobbed. "You were so far away. You could not understand. But now I hate him for coming between you and me. Why should he have caused such trouble? Nobody asked him to come here——"

"Well, Kitty," said he, taking her small head in his hands in the old way and kissing her, "I think no harm has been done; but you have been so imprudent——"

"Oh, I will confess anything if only you speak to me like that," said she, gladly, as she looked up through her tears.

"There would have been no trouble if only you had let me know. Of course, what I said about their taking away your good name was perhaps too serious. They have been talking though; and I should not have heeded one moment what they said if only I had known beforehand——"

"I am sure I don't care what they say," said she, taking his hand and kissing it, "so long as you don't quarrel with me, Willie. And I ought to have known. Miss Patience told me something like this would happen. 'But,' I said to her, 'surely he can't object to any one paying us an afternoon call; there's no harm in that.' And if you only knew how lonesome it is for us two, Willie, sometimes, you would understand how glad we were to have an occasional visitor.

Then he was very kind about the benefit; he took £20 worth of tickets—that was from me, not from the agents, so we did not lose the commission; and I have saved so much this winter that if it were only summer weather now I'd treat you and me and Miss Patience to a trip to Killarney."

"Kitty," he said sharply, "that fellow is humbugging you. He is not thinking of Killarney at all. He is dawdling after you, and people have noticed it. Now, for your own sake, and for mine—and for the sake of what has been between us in bygone days—you will have to be a little more—more circumspect, Kitty."

"Oh," said she, cheerfully, "I am willing to take any amount of scolding—that way. If only you hold me in your arms, you can scold away. And I believe it all then. I believe I am very bad. Of course I don't believe it when you provoke me and make me feel hurt and injured; then it's you who are in the wrong. And now you know how to make me do just as you like."

Making up a quarrel with Kitty was very nice; and it generally lasted a good long time between these two. There was a tap at the door.

"Come in!" said Kitty, quickly putting a considerable distance between them.

"Please, miss, Miss Patience wants to know when ye'd be for having your tay."

"Oh, now, at once, tell her;" and then she turned to Fitzgerald: "And now, Master Willie, will you help me to light the gas; and we will have the blind down; then tea; then you shall read to us 'The Battle of Ivry;' and it will be all like old times again. How odd it is," she proceeded, as she laid the cloth, "that we are always glad to have something like something that has happened to us before. I suppose in a year or two we shall be saying, 'Come along now and let us have tea snugly, like the old times, like the Sunday after the quarrel.' And it will be better than if we had nothing to look back to."

"And where will *that* tea take place, Kitty?" said he.

"Where, indeed?" said she, cheerfully. "Who can tell? I suppose in London."

Miss Patience came in, looking rather frightened. But

she was greatly relieved to find that her two companions were on excellent terms; indeed, when they all sat down to the tea-table, she had to rebuke Kitty for facetiously referring to Mr. Cobbs as the "fat boy."

"He is in an important position," said she, with some dignity. "He has it in his power to do a great deal of good. He can afford to be charitable. He has not to think of himself."

"That is fortunate, at least," said Fitzgerald, ungenerously, "for he would have little to think of, and little to do the thinking with. Now it seemed to me that he thought a great deal of himself."

"He is a very elegant-mannered young man," said Miss Patience with precision. "He is in an enviable situation —free from care, and able to attend to others. The country needs such persons; not adventurers who make money out of their politics; but gentlemen—educated gentlemen—who are above bribes, and can help to govern the country disinterestedly. He belongs to the class of men to whom we have to look for proper government——"

"God help us, then," said Fitzgerald, inadvertently.

"And I am glad to say that his opinions on public affairs——"

"His what?"

"His opinions," repeated Miss Patience with dignity.

"Well, to call the ignorant prejudices of a conceited young donkey like that, opinions, is, at all events, courteous. But no harm is done by the existence of such creatures. They go circling about the world, aimless, placeless, with no more influence on real politics than the pointers and setters of the United Kingdom. I daresay these young gentlemen encourage the importation of third-rate cigars from Havana; and they add greatly to the profits of the producers of bad champagne; and so there is a kind of reason for their existence."

"He is a very nice boy; and I won't have such things said about him," interposed Kitty; but she was laughing, for Miss Patience looked offended.

"One thing you can't help admiring about him," continued Fitzgerald, talking with familiar contempt about

Mr. Cobbs, as if he were some insect before them, "is his forbearance. Just fancy! Most men who could make £2000 in twenty-five minutes by remaining in Liverpool would think twice before coming away over to Cork and doing nothing. Look at that forbearance. He might affect the currency by draining such masses of gold from Odessa and elsewhere into England. Or is it his imagination that is most to be admired?"

"Willie!" Kitty said reproachfully. "You seem to have caught up the London way of believing in nothing."

"Oh no," said he, "I am pursuing a philosophical investigation. I want to know which part of his character to admire the most. I think it must be imagination—or prudence?—he departed quickly."

"I thought he behaved very well; and you abominably," said Kitty with her accustomed frankness. "And you have never yet apologised to me for your rudeness."

"Well, I do now, Kitty. I shall never be so rude again before you."

She touched his hand beneath the table.

"You shall never have occasion again," said she in a low voice.

It was a long afternoon and evening; but no afternoon and evening was half long enough when he and Kitty were together. And Miss Patience was kind; she went away occasionally—perhaps to her politics; leaving them together in the hushed warm little parlour, all thoughts of the dark world of London shut out, and only present to them the memories of summer rambles and of moonlight walks along the coast at Inisheen. Kitty was as pleased, and pretty, and fascinating as ever; you would not have thought that, but a few hours before, she had been standing opposite him with her eyes flashing and her cheeks pale with anger. She was now so gentle, so winning; the touch of her warm little hand was soft as velvet.

"And must you really go away again to-morrow, Willie?" she said—she was seated on the hearthrug before the fire, her head just touching his knee.

"I must indeed. I wrote to Mrs. Chetwynd begging her to let me off to-morrow night; and to-morrow night I

shall be neither there nor here, but on the wide sea that separates us, Kitty."

"It is such a long journey to take for merely a little talk like this."

"For more than that, Kitty."

She blushed somewhat, but said nothing.

"I am coming to the station to see you off, to-morrow," said she, at length.

"Would you?" said he, with great delight. "Would you take the trouble?"

"The trouble!" she exclaimed. "And I am going to do more than that, if you will let me. I want to get a proper kind of luncheon for you in a little basket; because —because it is a woman's place to provide such things"— said Kitty, with a trifle of self-conscious pride. "And I know what you men do; you stuff a lot of sandwiches into a piece of paper, and take them out and eat them when they are like leather."

"Not I," said he. "I have had a warning. An Academician's wife told me that sandwiches were most pernicious."

"An Academician's wife!" said Kitty. "And yet you deny you go out among those great ladies in London! Why don't you make haste, and make me a great lady, and take me about with you, instead of gallivanting about by yourself?"

"Am I not making haste, Kitty?"

"Yes; sitting by a fire in Audley Place, and letting me stroke your hand, while you ought to be fighting tooth and nail in London, with all your armour on, careering everything down before you."

"If it was that kind of fighting, Kitty, perhaps it would be easier," said he, absently; for he was thinking of the lonely room to which he was returning, with no Kitty to sit by him on the hearthrug, and stir the fire when it was getting low.

Next morning he thought she had forgotten her promise; for it was near the time of starting, and yet no Kitty had put in an appearance. Then he saw her come quickly along, alone; and she was breathless when she reached him.

"Oh, Willie, I thought I was too late; but here is the basket; and if the pie is a little warm still, it will be cold by the time you want it. I made it myself," she said, with a laugh and a blush, "last night after you were gone——"

"Last night!" he said. "After twelve?"

"What was that compared to your comfort?" said she, boldly. "And I thought you would like to know that my hands could do something besides—besides kissing a good-bye to you. And I was up this morning by six to get it in the oven. Oh, Willie, I have had so little time," she added breathlessly, "I could not quite get all the sawdust off the grapes—so be a little careful——"

"Oh, never mind these things," said he—for the guard was impatient. "But it is so kind of you, Kitty. You are always kind. And now I am going away again—who knows for how long?"

"That depends on you," she said, with a smile; and she kissed him; and she kept waving her handkerchief until the train was quite out of sight.

He was alone in the carriage; and he was gazing out of the window, seeing nothing. His whole visit this time had been so rapid and so strange. And he was so glad to take away with him the renewed assurance of Kitty's faith and constancy and love, that he could scarcely admit to himself the presence of a vague impression that it was now become more urgent than ever that he should seek to win his way in London.

The day wore on with these imaginings, until at last the base claims of hunger reminded him that he had been so ungrateful as to forget all about Kitty's parting gift. You may imagine the interest and delight with which he opened the pretty little basket, and bethought him of how Kitty's own fingers had placed such and such things there for him. Indeed a woman's hand was visible everywhere in the neatness with which everything was wrapped up and arranged. There was a small table-napkin, as white as snow. The knife and fork and spoon were all brilliant; and there was a tiny tumbler along with the half-bottle of claret. There was the pie that she had waited up in the night-time to make for him; and had she dressed the salad too? He

could see no sawdust at all on the bunch of grapes. And then his eyes and thoughts wandered away altogether from the materials of the little banquet; and he thought what a pretty housewife Kitty would make, filling the rooms with light, and singing, and hurrying up everybody in her fearless, independent way. And the rooms through which he saw her moving were the rooms of the little green and white house at Chelsea.

He had a beautiful night for crossing. The stars were extraordinarily brilliant. As the huge ship ploughed her way through the black waves, all the interest of the night was centred in the clear dome above, where the myriad eyes throbbed or gazed steadily. There was the resplendent Jupiter, not far from the misty Pleiades; Mars was unusually high in the heavens; Orion's jewels flashed; the great world above was lit with a million fires, while the one below was but a mournful sound of unseen water. And perhaps this young fellow sitting there on deck in the cold night (with his heart very warm with love) may have laughed to himself when he imagined what the scientific folk who came to Hyde Park Gardens would think of his way of looking at the stars. He had no anxiety to know whether there was any chloride of sodium in them. When he regarded their brilliancy, he thought of Kitty's eyes; their patient reappearance night after night, year after year, only reminded him of Kitty's faithfulness; and the far-reaching and luminous heavens themselves seemed really to belong to Inisheen, and to him, and to her, and to their secret walks along the shores in the nights gone by.

CHAPTER XIX.

A PROSPECT.

THE first thing that Fitzgerald did on returning to London was to hunt up Andy the Hopper, and transfer him from Limehouse to the Fulham Road; and during these next few days, while Andy hung about and acted as general servant as well as he could, and while John Ross and his neighbour made successive experiments with the wild-fowl and game that had come from the south of Ireland, things went cheerfully enough. The woodcock were Inisheen woodcock; and he was proud that Ross approved of them highly. Then he took Andy to see one or two of the sights of London; but Andy was somewhat of a failure. He merely gaped. Fitzgerald (so desperate was his need) thought he might induce some editor to accept a paper descriptive of a wild Irishman's first impressions of the great city; but he could not make much out of the staring eyes, the open mouth, and the occasional muttered exclamation which were the only evidences of Andy's amazement.

At last, when Andy was going away, Fitzgerald said to him—

"Look here, Andy, I have a word for you."

"Av ye plase, sir."

"You may as well know that I am going to marry the young lady who was at Inisheen that time you remember."

"Baithershins, Masther Willie!" exclaimed Andy, with a vast and capacious grin. "'Twas the divil's own diversion for ye to go sporting about with the gyurl, and then to go and lave her like that——"

"Hold your tongue or I'll pitch you down the stair," said Fitzgerald, angrily; and Andy's face changed instantly, for he perceived that this was no joke at all.

"Is it thrue, Masther Willie?" said he, with great concern.

"It is true. She is going to be my wife; now you know."

"'Tis the proud gyurl she'll be, thin!" said Andy. "Oh, didn't I suspect that same now, for all the jokin'? 'Sure,' I said, 'Masther Willie wouldn't be afther takin' the throuble to walk about wid the English young lady if 'twasn't a coortin'?' Oh, the beautiful young crayture now! Sure a purtier young lady ye wouldn't find betwixt the Blackwater and the Shannon. She's the flower o' faymales, and that's thrue."

"The what?"

Andy glanced at the young master anxiously.

"'Tis what they say in poethry," said he, with some hesitation.

"Well, attend to me, Andy. There has been some gossiping going on in Inisheen, I gather. Well, now, attend to this: the first that you hear say anything about that young lady, you take your hopping-pole and lay it over his head. Do you understand that now?"

"Faix, it might be my own head I'd have to break, thin," said Andy. "For wasn't it mesilf that brought the story of what Corney Malone—the divil sweep him!—was saying? But sure, Masther Willie, when they know you're going to marry the young lady—the beautiful crayture she is!—do ye think they'd be afther saying anything more?" Then Andy, after a second, added valiantly: "No matter, Masther Willie; if the laping-pole will do, 'tis at your sarvice; and divil the man or boy in Inisheen has a head so thick that it won't break—glory be to God!"

But Fitzgerald also knew that there would be no more gossiping after this authoritative announcement: and why should it not be known that he was going to marry Kitty?

So Andy went away back to Ireland; and the days passed; and spring came in mild and humid weather to Chelsea; and the old hard fight was continued, now with

illusive hopes, now with keen disappointments, always with a terrible anxiety. For that was what he had definitely brought away with him from Cork; a haunting consciousness that it was necessary he should get on at once. And how could he bring editors to understand that? They knew nothing about Inisheen. They would keep his MSS. for indefinite periods; sometimes lose them; sometimes return them after the subject of which they treated had passed from the public mind. For Fitzgerald, having brought his burlesque of pot-house politics to an end, had begun to try his hand at real politics; but the difficulty was to get an opening for these carefully-prepared articles of his. More than once the conductor of a journal took the trouble to write to him, in returning one of these, to explain that he approved of it, and might have used it in his paper, but that all such subjects were treated by the regular members of his staff, which at the moment was full. Fitzgerald found most encouragement from the projectors of new magazines, who were prepared to put him on their staff at once; but as his payment in most cases was to be contingent on some future share of profits, the arrangement did not seem satisfactory. By some extraordinary chance, which he himself could scarcely understand, he got one article inserted in the monthly magazine which at that time was far and away ahead of all its fellows; and as his name was attached, he had at least the pride of sending it to Kitty. But his subsequent efforts in that direction only resulted in heartrending delay and disappointment. In short, he had to learn, as many an unfortunate wretch has had to learn and will have to learn, that fugitive writing of this kind is valueless as a means of living.

"Ye are trying too much, laddie," said John Ross to him, one evening, when they were having a smoke together in the hollow-sounding studio. "Ye are writing about everything in the universe. Is it politics or leeterature ye're after?"

"I don't know," said Fitzgerald. "What I do know is that I ought to have been learning shorthand when I was shooting snipe. Then I could have got on in newspaper work by the usual stages. Now I can't get my foot on the

first rung of the ladder—unless it's the treadmill: that's the only occupation in this country that you can get hold of without any introduction or training. Oh, of course, what I should like would be literature," he added, remembering the dreams with which he had set out for London. "But I don't see any permanent work in that; what they seem to like best is my verses; and these you can't manufacture at will. I have once or twice tried writing a novel; that is no use; I found myself imitating somebody else in spite of myself. No, the only constant occupation for a writing man I see is newspaper work, and all the newspaper-offices are full. Never mind," said he, cheerfully, as he struck another match, "I can live. I can always earn my living as a gamekeeper. Perhaps it was too cheeky of me to come away from Cork and attempt to fight my way single-handed in London literature. I had no introductions; no influence. I got some help at the beginning; but I had to pay for that pretty heavily. Well, I have not quite given in yet. I mean still to try for a time. And then if I am beaten—well, I shall have had the experience; that is something."

He had been talking very contentedly and even cheerfully; but now a slight shadow seemed to come over the square forehead and the clear and thoughtful eyes.

"Life would be a simple matter—it would be easy enough," said he, "if one had only oneself to consider. But it is different when you have to ask some one else for the sacrifice of expectations."

Ross glanced at him.

"That depends on the young lass' herself," said he, "that depends on what *she* is like."

Fitzgerald was too deeply occupied to resent the imputation or inference.

"Ross," said he, eagerly, "you've never told me what you think about women. You've talked about everything else in the world, I believe, except that."

The other laughed.

"What I think about women?" said he. "The laddie's cracked. What chance has any man o' forming a judgment on the half o' the human race? Ye may get to know

two women, or three women, or may be even half-a-dozen women, in the whole course of your life; and ye're well off if they happen to be decent sort o' creatures, for it's from them ye are likely to form your opeenion o' the whole lot."

"You remember me telling you about Hilton Clarke?"

"I remember the meeserable wretch," said Ross, plainly.

"Oh, but I bear him no grudge," said Fitzgerald. "At least, not for the money part of the business. I don't believe he meant to swindle anybody. It was merely that he was lacking in a kind of sixth sense that keeps most people straight about money. I daresay, if he had money to-morrow, and I wanted it, he would let me have it."

"I daresay he would do nothing of the kind," said Ross, severely. "And the sixth sense ye speak of—do ye mean common honesty?"

"Well, it isn't that that I remember against him; but he had a most pernicious habit of putting things into your head——"

"Put them out again, then, for God's sake. Would ye listen to the teaching of a man like that?"

"But it is not so easy to put them out. You keep asking yourself whether his theories are true or not; and then life is so much of a mystery; and people who are older than you yourself are must have had so much more experience of human nature——"

"That ye should believe them? No. I say no!" John Ross said; and whatever he did say he said emphatically, even if it involved the knocking off the head of his pipe. "I say no. I say, ask first of all with what sort of spectacles they have been looking at human nature."

"For example," said Fitzgerald—but why did he avert his eyes, and pretend to be busy with the stove, to hide his shamefacedness?—"he had a theory, or a conviction rather, that there were many women who were really too affectionate—too kind and generous—who could not help falling in love with anybody who was near them. He said they would keep quite faithful and true so long as you were beside them; but in absence they could not help letting their tenderness of heart begin to suggest possibilities: until, perhaps before they quite knew themselves, they

grew fonder and fonder of the new-comer; and then you see, what the world would call the breaking of a troth, heartlessness, or something like that, had really come about because the woman had too much kindness and affection in her nature——"

"What kind of a woman do ye call that?" said Ross, with harsh contempt. "What kind of affection do ye call that? I call it the affection that exists between rabbits. God be thanked, that's no the kind o' women I have met——"

"Then you don't think there are such women?" said Fitzgerald, eagerly, and he raised his head at last. "Women whose excess of kindness would always be keeping one in anxiety? You think that was merely a fantastic theory?"

"I mind one poor lass," said Ross, absently, "that had too much love in her heart; but that was not the way it went. A winsome bit lassie she was; so jimp and neat and blithe; and I think half the laddies in the school where I was at Beith were head over ears in love with her; and mony's the sair fight there was amongst us about her. She was to be married to a young fellow—a sailor-lad he was, I think, though she was but sixteen or seventeen; and what must he do one night at Greenock but get fuddled and go out capering in a boat in one of the docks and get drowned in the dark. The poor lass never held up her head. She had some money, too; for her father had left her some bits of cottages at Beith; and many a one came after her; but she had not a word for any of them. She just dwindled away—though she had been as healthy a lass as any in the parish; and in three or four years' time they put her in the kirkyaird; and though folk say that nobody ever dies o' a broken heart, I do not know what else it was that Jean Shaw died o'. Ay, that was one. Then there were two more—I may say three—that never married because they could not get the man they wanted. That's four—a good number in one man's experience. Oh, but I've known the other side, too—young lasses changing their mind—giddy creatures, for the most part, wanting to cut a dash with more money than their first sweetheart had. And there's one," said he, with a grim smile, "that

I would like to know more about now. She was in a place in Glasgow—I mean she was a servant-lass—and her sweetheart was a working plumber—a roaring, swearing, drunken sort o' fellow. Then she must needs take up with some shopkeeper-laddie, as being more genteel, d'ye see? and there was some quarrelling until the plumber got hold o' the young fellow, and smashed him almost into bits. That was a seven years' business for him. So as soon as he was safe out o' the way, she married the shopkeeper; and no doubt everything went well until the seven years began to come down to six and five and four and three. The last I heard was that the husband and wife were living in daily fear o' their lives; for the plumber was soon to be out; and he had sworn to murder the pair o' them. Man," said Ross, bringing down his fist on his knee, "why dinna you leeterary people go where ye can see human passion in the rough, where ye can see the real tragedy of life? That is no among the fine people—the nobeelity; for there money lets an ill-assorted couple go different ways; and at the worst, if the wife goes to the bad, the husband is too much of a philosopher to bother himself into a rage about it, for he has run through all the experiences of life long before he ever got married. And it's no among the middle classes; they are too well-conducted and circumspect; they fear the talk o' their church-going and chapel-going neighbours. No, it's among the lower, or even the lowest classes, that the passions are simple and intense. When the woman is faithless, the man murders her, or tries to, regardless of consequences. Starvation, the madness o' drink, the pitiableness of the weak, the fight for bread—these are the things that show ye what the struggles, the passions, the bigness, the littleness o' human nature are. Leave your books, man, and get out to Bermondsey, or Spitalfields, or Shadwell, and study the men and women there——"

"Oh, I am not a dramatist," said Fitzgerald. "Besides, I think you are quite mistaken." Ross was continually dogmatising about his own profession; why should not he about his? "You may find brute force there, and violent jealousy; anything else you must take with you. And

when you begin planting your literary theories—your noble sentiments, that are the product of refinement—into that coarse soil, the crop is merely affectation. The bully who suddenly bursts out crying when he hears a canary is a mere sham—unless he is drunk, when he would probably get up and strangle the canary. Passion in the rough?—Yes, the rough sometimes has a good deal of passion—when he kicks his mother. Thank you; but before I go and try to paint a picture of the costermonger—with a pewter pot in his hand, and love and innocence in his heart—I shall wait to see what effect a course of lectures on limelight will have on him."

Ross regarded him for a second.

"Ye're a deep young fellow," he said, "for all your frank face. Or is it pride? I'm afraid the young lady up there and you don't get on very well together."

"Oh, I think she means to be very civil to me. I think, from little suggestions, that she has been talking to her aunt about sending me over as bailiff to an estate they have at Bantry. Well, I don't wonder at it. My present post is rather too much of a sinecure."

"Other people manage to live on sinecures happily eneuch," said Ross, bluntly; "I wish to heaven I had half-a-dizzen o' them!"

"And then," continued Fitzgerald, with some tell-tale colour in his face, "the other people about that house are all such hard-working people—I mean those you sometimes meet by chance—that one feels such an idler. I do believe at this minute," he said in desperation, "if they were to give me a decent salary as bailiff at that farm, I'd take it and have done with literature. I can enjoy literature without trying to make any; and I should be in my own element over there. But what were we talking about?" He pretended to make a cast back. "Oh yes; about Hilton Clarke's theories about women. Well, here are other two women—these Chetwynds—who, I am sure, are perfectly honest and upright and believable. My experience has not been very great; I can scarcely remember my mother; and I had no sisters. But most of the women I have been more or less acquainted with,

have been, as it seemed to me, a good deal better and more honest and more unselfish than the men; and—and in short you wouldn't be inclined to doubt your own experiences even when a man who has seen more of the world than you have, tries to make you less believing?"

"I would send him to the devil!" said Ross, decisively. "Believe in the honesty of men and women, and in the wise providence and justice o' things as long as ye can; and when ye cannot, put it down to your personal bad luck, and dinna accuse everybody of stealing because here or there some one has robbed ye. The truth is, ye are anxious about that young lass in Ireland."

Fitzgerald started, and was inclined to be angry. But what was the use? His friend had guessed the truth, much as Fitzgerald had tried to conceal it from him and also from himself. Yes; he was anxious; it had come to that.

"Is she a braw lass?"

"I think you mean handsome? No, she is not imposing, if that is what you mean. But she is exceedingly pretty. I can talk to you about her with impunity; for you don't know her name. She is very pretty, and very winning and tender-hearted, and clever too. Think of her being content to wait on and on like this, while I am floundering about without any certain prospects whatever."

"Content to wait!" exclaimed Ross. "Goodness me, what would be the worth of her if she were not content to wait? A fine kind of lass to have that would be. And ye have two pounds a week as a certainty, with constant small addeetions? Get her over, man, and marry her! Two pounds a week! The great majority of the human race live on far less; and what is good for the muckle is no' bad for the pickle."

This bold and sudden challenge startled him; but was not the wild project as beautiful as it was wild? The thought of it! What if Kitty were really to consent? They could take a couple of small rooms somewhere, and work and wait in patience—with love and blessed content their constant companions—until the happier time came. Would it not be fine in after-life, when things had gone

well with them, to be able to talk of their early struggle and of their adventures and their fears and hopes? Kitty's letters had not been very cheerful of late: might not this sudden challenge deliver her from the bond of despondency?

But he dared not make so fateful a proposal without much anxious care; and as it turned out, on the very next evening, something happened that promised to aid him most materially. When he had got through his appointed hour, and had risen to leave, Mrs. Chetwynd said to him —obviously with a little embarrassment—

"Mr. Fitzgerald, I—I want to explain something. You know you are on such friendly terms with us—at least I hope so—I hope you feel quite at home in the house—it is rather difficult to speak about money matters. But they have to be spoken about; for every one must live, I suppose. And—and, in fact—Mary was saying that a great deal more of your time was being occupied than appeared to be the case——"

"Oh, I hope you won't speak of it," said he. "My time is not so valuable."

"Everybody's time is valuable," said the old lady, with a smile, "for it is easy to make it so. Mary was saying you must spend a great deal of time in looking over these new books——"

"That is a pleasure to myself."

"Now, Mr. Fitzgerald, is it fair? I have a frightful task to get through with, and you won't let me alone. If Mr. Scobell were in England, I should have asked him. However, here is the truth; that my conscience won't allow me to occupy so much of your time on the present terms; and I propose to make a difference. If," said she, rather hesitatingly, "if you would kindly take that envelope with you, you will find in it the arrears—a small sum, but my conscience will be clear—and now, not another word —for I've got through with it, and I am quite happy. Now, good-night, and not a word."

"Not of thanks?" said he.

"No; good-night; go away," said the old lady, with a light little laugh; she was clearly very well pleased to have got it over.

In this open and unaddressed envelope he had found a cheque, drawn out in Mary Chetwynd's clear and precise hand, and signed by her aunt, for £65. The rapidest of calculations showed him what this meant. He was to have two hundred a year, then, instead of one? The vision that this opened up left no room for those over-sensitive perplexities that he had laid before his friend Ross. His heart was beating too quickly. The question was, what arguments, what entreaties, what pretty phrases would bring Kitty to him from over the sea.

He walked rapidly, he knew not whither. The darkness was pleasant. Never had he struggled so with the composition of any leading article affecting the interests of India, or China, or Peru. He tried to meet beforehand every possible objection. He thought of all the nice things he could say to win her consent. At what hour he got home to his lodgings he did not quite know; but that important letter was yet far from being arranged.

It took him, indeed, the whole night to write it; destroying numberless copies that seemed to him to leave a loophole of escape here or there. He felt that Kitty's letters had been somewhat cold and matter-of-fact of late; he was afraid she might judge this one coldly; he had to make everything safe, so that she should feel the future was absolutely secure. And when at last he did go out to post this letter at the nearest pillar letter-box, behold! the wan gray light of daybreak was stealing over the skies, and far away there was the rumble of the first of the carts.

I do not know who was the Postmaster-General at that precise time; but have no doubt that when Fitzgerald dropped the heavy letter under the metal lid, he was as impatient with him as Juliet was with her nurse.

> "Love's heralds should be thoughts,
> Which ten times faster glide than the sun's beams,
> Driving back shadows over low'ring hills:
> Therefore do nimble-pinioned doves draw Love,
> And therefore hath the wind-swift Cupid wings.
> Now is the sun upon the highmost hill
> Of this day's journey——"

Well, the sun was not yet quite so high; but it was

slowly spreading abroad its beams; and the world of London was awaking. Fitzgerald was in no humour for sleep; he thought he would rather go away down to the river, to have a look at a little green and white house there; and there was a light as of the dawn on his face.

CHAPTER XX.

SOME CORRESPONDENCE.

YES; there was no doubt of it; during the months that had elapsed since his hurried visit to Cork, Kitty's letters had grown much more cold, or, at least, much more reserved and matter-of-fact; while now and again there was a tone of disappointment running through them which he had striven to overlook at the moment. Now, as he re-read them, with this glorious prospect—this near and shining future—before him, he sought for reasonable explanations and excuses, and easily found them. The spring had been wet and boisterous; and Kitty's spirits were readily affected by the weather and its discomforts. Then she had had a good deal of travelling; and that would account for the curtness of some of the notes, Kitty being ordinarily a most profuse letter-writer. And then again the news that he had had it in his power to send her was not of the most cheering description—though he had tried to put the best face possible on matters. Altogether, looking over these letters again, and regarding them by this new light, he could find nothing disquieting in them; on the contrary, they were quite natural in the circumstances: the question was how would Kitty write now?

He could not doubt how she would answer his appeal. The summer was coming on, with all its beautiful new hopes, new desires, new possibilities. During that winter, Kitty had again and again, and not at all to his sorrow, pretty plainly hinted that she was dissatisfied with her present way of living. It had become distressingly mono-

tonous. There were no ambitious hopes to lure her on. Only once had she expressed herself as being pleased with her surroundings; and that was on a professional visit to Dublin, where, instead of having to go to the usual lodgings, she had been the guest, along with Miss Patience, of the wife of the manager of a theatre there; and that lady had introduced Kitty to a number of people, and made her life a little more cheerful for her for a time. Then she had to return to the provinces; and to miserable rooms; and the fatigues of travelling; and, as the weather happened to be exceptionally bad, it was no wonder she should grow tired or even querulous at times. And when people are disheartened, they do not write long and playful letters, full of pretty sentiment and pleasant humour. How could Kitty be cheerful and amusing with her fingers benumbed with the cold, her feet wet, and adverse winds blowing the smoke down the chimney?

But now all this would be altered. There would be no more need for letters; Kitty herself would be there to talk to, to talk, and submit to be teased. And what happy excursions would there be on the clear summer mornings, wandering about Chelsea to fix on their future and permanent home. As for himself, he would not choose, even in imagination, until Kitty should come over. She ought to have her share of the responsibility. And what her eyes approved, he did not think he should find much fault with.

That anxiously awaited letter was a long while in coming; many and many a time, when he heard the postman ascending the stair outside, had his heart beat quick only to be disappointed. But at last it came; and to his astonishment he found on the back of the envelope the name of a Killarney hotel. He hastily opened it—the letter was written on hotel paper—in fact there was an engraving of Lough Leane at the head of the page! How had Kitty got there? She had not said a word of any such intention!

Breathlessly he ran his eyes over the various sheets—for this time Kitty had written at length—hoping to find some phrase decisive of her reply. She had got his letter

evidently; but nowhere was there any positive acquiescence or positive refusal so far as he could gather from that hurried and uncertain glance. And so—with more dread of disappointment than actual disappointment—and still with some trembling hope—he forced himself to read the letter systematically through.

"MY DEAR WILLIE—Your letter has followed me here; and I will never forgive you for not having driven me to go to Killarney many a day ago. I suppose it was all because of your jealousy; you wanted to bring me here yourself; as if the place belonged to you! And the idea of my having been many a time at Limerick, and Mallow, and Cork; the idea of my having had to sing the Killarney song in the panorama; without even having been to this Paradise! I suppose I thought it was too familiar, because I knew all the places in the photographs in the windows; but neither they, nor the panorama, nor anything else, could have told me of the charm of this beautiful neighbourhood. We were out last night in a boat; there was no moon; but the stars were *lovely*. We rowed to Innisfallen; and I sung one or two songs—the sound was so strange when we got near the island; I was wondering whether the ghosts in the Abbey would hear. What a beautiful night it was.

"Of course you are asking what brought me here. Well, dear Willie, I have had a great deal of bother, and some hard work of late; and I thought I had earned a little holiday; and everybody said we ought to go to Killarney in the spring; and Miss Patience and I have done it as cheaply as we could. Where in the world could we have come to for such perfect peace and rest? This hotel is nearly empty; when we went to Muckross Abbey and the Torc Cascade and all round there, we were quite by ourselves; and when we go out on the lake there are no *tourists* anywhere. The day we arrived, however, there was a fearful tempest. I said to myself, Goodness gracious, is this Killarney? I thought Killarney was always quite still, with moonlight on it (as it was in the panorama). The wind and the rain were dreadful; the mountains

were quite black except when the clouds crossed and hid them; and the waves on the lake smashed on the rocks at Innisfallen and sprung up in foam just like the sea. But now everything is quiet and lovely; and I feel as if this was the Vale of Avoca that I should like to rest in, with the friends I love best; only I suppose there never is rest like that for everybody; trouble is the policeman that steps in and orders you to move on.

"Dear Willie, I feel quite afraid to begin and try to answer your letter; for I know you won't understand what I mean about it. I entirely agree with you about a private life—it has been the wish of my heart for many a day; I am quite tired of the annoyances of my *public* one. People think it is a fine easy thing to earn your living by merely singing songs; I wish they knew what hard work and uncertain work it is. Of course, one's vanity is pleased sometimes, when you have nice things said to you, or when the audience is very enthusiastic; but what a temporary thing that is! When I stayed with Mrs. Milroy in Dublin I was quite delighted with the little occupations and visits and amusements with which they passed the time; and I know that would suit me; and as for your suggestion that I might some day regret giving up this kind of life, you might have saved yourself all the arguing against it; it is the last thing, I *know*, that will ever occur to me; and I should be ready this minute to give it up, if I could do so safely.

"People never do get what they want, I suppose; and I suppose it is better for them in the long run. And for you to think, just now, when you are making a path for yourself that will lead to future fame, of hampering yourself in the way you propose—well, I can understand your dreaming of it, for you were always so romantic and strange in your notions, but I have got worldly wisdom enough for both of us, and I can see what a pity it would be. When you want a clear way for your genius, you tie all this domestic anxiety round your neck! Consider how precarious you would be. That old lady might die at any moment, and then——! I am afraid, dear Willie, that your literary prospects by themselves wouldn't warrant you in doing as you propose; and do you know I, for one, am

not so sorry there should be such difficulty and hard work, for if there was not, wouldn't everybody be at it, and where would be the glory of making a name for yourself, if everybody could step in and do it? I know you distrust your powers; I don't; and I should think myself mean and unscrupulous if I allowed my private wishes to interfere with your future. I know some day you will have reason to thank me. Was it not me who sent you away from that miserable little office in Cork to take the place that your genius entitles you to? I as good as said—

'Go where glory waits thee,
But while Fame elates thee,
Oh! still remember me!
When the praise thou meetest
To thine ear is sweetest,
Oh! then remember me!'

I know you always laugh at my poetry; but I like poetry that one can understand, that has common sense in it; and there is common sense in that. I expect great things of you; and so would the world if it knew as much as I did; and it seems to me that, with gifts such as yours, you have no right to throw up your career, or at least seriously hamper it, for the mere gratification of a piece of romance. But that was always like you, Willie. You look at things in such a strange way. You don't seem to value things as other people do; and you don't appear to consider it is your duty to get on in the world, and make money, and a security for your old age. I have seen a good deal of the world; I have seen what money can do; what good you can do with it; how independent it makes you. I believe if it had not been for me, you would have kept on in Cork, simply because you had the chance of living a half-sailor, half-gamekeeper life at Inisheen; and you would never have thought of the time when you would no longer be able to go after rock-pigeons. And so, dear Willie, you must try and be a little less romantic in the meantime; and do justice to the gifts you have; and by-and-by you will thank me, and say that everything has been for the best.

"Now I know you have quite misunderstood me; and you are angry, in your wild way, and accuse me of being

mercenary—me! I have never had enough money to know what mercenariness was—and of course you are impatient that everything can't come about just as if it were a story-book. Alas! I wish it could; and everybody be satisfied; but there is always trouble, even to those who make the strongest fight against the inclinations of their heart, and try to do what is best for every one around them. Just imagine me lecturing you like this! And yet you know, dear Willie, that you are too poetical; and so I must be the commonplace person—even here, with Killarney before me. There was a dreadful accident to the coach as we were coming. There is a steep hill some miles before you get here, and one of the two horses fell, and the force of the coach dragged it along, and the poor beast's knees were horrible to look at. It just managed to walk the distance; though I thought every moment it would go down. But what a fine thing it must be to have a carriage and one's own horses, and drive all through these beautiful places quite at your leisure, and without a thought for the future. Just fancy not having to care a farthing whether June or August is near or far off; nothing but to enjoy the present moment; and drive from one hotel to another, irrespective of time and without a thought about the cost. I think people who can have such happiness to themselves ought to be very kind to other people. I know I should try to be. I can imagine myself driving through the country like that; and if there was any trouble, it would be the thought that I could not make all the poor people one might meet just as contented as oneself. One might meet, who knows, some young fellow going away from his sweetheart, *forced by fate*, and very much troubled about his prospects; and a letter of introduction or something might save misery. But these are all idle dreams; and one must take the world as it is.

"I am so glad that that kind old lady has again befriended you; and hope that something *substantial and permanent* may come of her friendship for you; but even if these hopes are disappointed, I am convinced you did right in going away to London. Genius such as yours is a trust. You had no right to waste your time fishing and boating

and shooting. Even if it were to be decided by fate that you and I were never to meet again, do you not think I should watch your career, of which I am far more certain than you are? Of course, I don't say that success is to come all at once. I do believe you are working your best; though I don't think from what you say that that Scotch artist—I thought the Scotch were so practical!—does you any good. I suppose he thinks it would be romantic to live in a *garret;* and if I was a *bare foot lassie*, perhaps it would; but now again you will accuse me of mercenariness just because I have to talk common sense. I don't believe there's anybody in the world cares less for money than I do; but I see what money can do, and how it gives people time to be thoughtful and kind to those around them; and in any case I am not going to be the one to wreck such a career as you have before you, Scotchman or no Scotchman.

"I have been so much occupied here that I forget whether I thanked you for the volume of political speeches that you sent Miss Patience; but at all events I was asked, and intended to do so, with her best compliments. The book seems to be highly appreciated; she has scarcely stirred out since we came here. As for our stay here, that is quite uncertain; but I am in love with the scenery (it is far prettier and not as grand or wild as I expected, and you know I prefer quietness to Alpine terrors), and I shall tear myself away with great regret. We make our way on to Limerick, where I have four concerts—the old mill-wheel again after this Paradise. So, dear Willie, you need not write here if you are writing, but to the post office, Limerick, and I shall expect a letter saying that you know I am acting in the best kindness, and laying myself open to the charge of being a money-grasping young woman (which is absurd, you know, for if I was, where is there any to grasp?) when all I want is to act prudently for you and me. Good-bye, dear Willie, if there's any one wishes you a speedily secure position and great fame and reputation such as you deserve, there's no one wishes that more heartily than

"Your affectionate KITTY.

"*P.S.*—Thursday morning. Dearest Willie, this letter

does read so business-like that I am ashamed of it; and yet I can't burn it, and have to go over all the arguments again. It quite wore out my small brain last night; and there were such difficulties too—such interruptions—that it seems all confused. I meant it to be so kind; and it reads like a school-book. Never mind, Willie, you know I am not mercenary; and that no one wishes you to get on more heartily than I do. I meant the letter to be *very kind indeed;* and at least you will be pleased that I am delighted with Killarney. Good-bye. The morning is lovely; and we are just going out for a row."

"Going out for a row?" he repeated mechanically to himself. Who were going out for a row? Miss Patience, according to Kitty's own showing, scarcely stirred out of the hotel at all. And what were they doing there? How had he heard nothing about it? What did all this mean —about the trouble of the world, and the sacrifice of one's inclinations, and a future for him of which she was to be the distant spectator? He read the letter over again, in a bewildered sort of way. It was not like Kitty—it was not like the wilful, petulant, loving and teasing Kitty at all. It is true that her letters had for some time past been reserved—occasionally hurried and curt; but here was a long rambling letter laying bare all her thoughts, and it did not sound as if it was Kitty who was speaking. And was she laying bare all her thoughts? he asked himself. Was it her great regard for his future fame that caused her to refuse his appeal—an appeal that seemed to him to be so simple and natural and opportune?

Then he eagerly grasped at the notion that perhaps his abrupt proposal had startled her. This was but maiden coyness. She had been alarmed by the definite request that she should come over and be married and occupy these humble apartments until a more suitable dwelling could be chosen. These rambling arguments of hers were a mere girlish trick of fence. Modesty was sheltering itself behind the guise of prudence. And he could have laughed at Kitty's imploring him to believe that she was not mercenary—as if it were likely he could suspect her of that!

Still there was something very strange and disquieting in the tone of this letter; and when he sat down to answer, he experienced the novel sensation of being afraid. Afraid of Kitty! If he could have caught her by both hands, he would not have been afraid. But that was the mischief of it—the great distance between them. That was why he was afraid—afraid of the misunderstandings that letters cause. He wrote hurriedly; he seemed to have so much to say; and wished to say it all at once; and, moreover, he must needs write in good spirits if he would drive away her despondency.

"My darling Kitty—I have received your extraordinary letter. It does not sound as if you had written it at all. Why are you so serious? What has frightened you? Are you the same Kitty that, when I first came to London, used to write every day nearly, 'Make haste; make haste; for I love you so!'? And now there is not a word of love in this long letter; but a great deal of downheartedness and fear and political economy and Benjamin Franklin sort of wisdom. And then, my pretty-eyed philosopher, your facts are a little askew. You accuse me of being too poetical; and if to love you is to be romantic and poetical, I will admit the charge. But if you mean that I allow poetry or anything else to interfere with my care for the future you are all wrong. You don't know how rigidly I've saved up every possible penny since I came to London. I don't go taking holidays at Killarney; when I have to go for a journey, it's all because of a wicked young woman who won't be reasonable and sensible and come and be married at once. And really and seriously, Kitty, what have you to fear? I have £110 saved; and £200 a year is quite enough to make a start with, in a quiet way; and if things go better, won't you be rather glad in after life that you and I were together during the poorer time? You talk about my being precarious (your English, Miss Kitty, has not been improved by the Killarney air), but is not everything and everybody more or less so? You are like Miss Patience, thinking that literature is so precarious a profession because a tile might fall on your head from a roof. No doubt this old lady might die; but so might

you, or I; and surely, since life is so uncertain, common sense would counsel you to make the best of it while you may. Life is not such a very long thing; youth is still shorter; and surely when two people love each other, and have a little faith in the future, and a reasonable security in the present, even Benjamin Franklin, Poor Richard, Catherine Romayne, and similar philosophers, might admit that it would be unwise to throw away a certain happiness on the chance of some good to come. It seems so strange to have to talk to you like this, Kitty, even as a joke. I can scarcely believe this letter of yours to be serious. Who was it who declared that she could live on nothing; who implored me never to leave her; who asked me to 'live in her heart, and pay no rent'? And all that happened little more than a year ago. What has changed her so in so short a time?

"I know. They say that once in every seven years, on a beautiful summer morning, just at sunrise, the O'Donoghue of the Lakes comes down from his magic home in the mountains, riding a white horse, and accompanied by fairies. He rides across Lough Leane, and wherever he goes on the dry land all his old possessions and splendour appear again; and when he has seen that everything is right he sets out home again. Now no doubt you have heard that, if you have courage enough, you can go with him, and cross Lough Leane dry-shod, and accompany him to his home in the mountains, where, before bidding you good-bye, he will present you with part of his buried treasure. Have I found you out, Miss Kitty? Are you watching for the O'Donoghue of the Lakes? Is that why your small head is stuffed with 'mercenariness'? Are you so anxious to be rich, and drive through the country with a carriage and pair, that you get up every morning at that hotel before sunrise and wander away down to the lake-side and look across and watch for the white horse and its rider? Is that the peculiar charm you have found in Killarney? And of course the want of sleep and the going about so much alone, and the witchery of the whole thing, have dazed you a little, and made you apprehensive, so that I can scarcely believe it is you who are speaking to me.

"My dearest Kitty, you must really throw aside these unreasonable fears—you who used to be so fearless, too! If you are afraid to take such a decisive step as coming to London by yourself, I will come over and fetch you. I am entitled to a long holiday. Dearest Kitty, how would it do for me to come over and meet you at Limerick, and stay there long enough to be married, and go back over the Killarney route? I am confident I could take you to beautiful places you are not likely to find on the ordinary tourist route. Write—no, telegraph one word—'Yes'—that can't take up much of your time, and I will come over at once. And then, you see, as one must be practical and business-like in order to please you, getting married in that quiet way would be very inexpensive; you would have no white silk gown to buy, and I should have no lockets to get for the bridesmaids. Now, Kitty, take heart of grace, and telegraph at once. If you telegraph from Killarney, I will go right on to Limerick and wait for you there. Don't think about it; do it; if you sit down and begin to make out all sorts of calculations, as if you were the secretary of a life insurance company, of course you will arrive at no decision at all, but only plunge yourself in gloom. What a trip that will be, if you will only say 'Yes'! If you went by Bandon and Dunmanway, we will come back by Inchigeelah; and of course we shall go down to Inisheen—and perhaps to the stream there, some moonlight night, just to let Don Fierna and the rest of them know that you had not quite forgotten. You have not quite forgotten, Kitty? I had the date engraved on the ring you gave me; and then I grudged the expense; for it was useless. There are some things that are engraven on the heart; they become a part of you; you can put them away from you only when you put life away; and I do not think that either of us is likely to forget the vow of that night.

"Well, now, Kitty, the inhuman wretch who occupies the quaint small house by the river that I told you of still remains in it; I often take a turn round that way to see if there is not a board up; but no, the wretched limpet still clings to his shell. Never mind; we shall have plenty of time to walk about and pick out a comfortable little place

for ourselves; for, you see, I can always use the fine mornings for walking out, and shift on my work to the time of rain. And then, when we give ourselves a whole holiday, Kitty, there is no end to the beautiful, quiet places one can get to from this neighbourhood. I have explored them all; and the whole time I was thinking 'I know Kitty will be charmed with this place; and I am certain she never could have been here before.' Scarcely anybody knows what beautiful sequestered spots there are in Richmond Park alone. Then, you see, Kitty, by taking those furnished rooms to begin with, you will be able to fall into housekeeping ways by degrees; and we shall take plenty of time to choose a pretty small house, and put things into it just as we want them. You will be surprised at the knowledge I have acquired of the prices of tables and chairs and carpets; and Ross—that is your Scotch friend—has promised, *when the great time comes*, to present you with a tea-service of old black Wedgwood that he picked up somewhere in Surrey, and that is about the only thing of value that he possesses. Just fancy your sitting in state at your own tea-table in your own house! 'Will you have another cup of tea, Mr. Ross?' 'No, thank you, my dear Mrs. Fitzgerald, but if you would sing another of those Irish songs, that is what I would like to have.' Then you go to the piano; of course we must hire a piano the very first thing, for you are not going to forget your music, Miss Kitty, when you enter upon domestic slavery. And what about 'The Minstrel Boy' for our Scotchman? Or will you make him cry with 'Silent, oh Moyle!' Or do you think he will care as much for 'The Bells of Shandon' as we do? I think not. He does not know certain associations. He cannot recall the white Sunday mornings; and the quietude of the country walks; and Kitty declaring that she should never have the courage to marry anybody, and that her proper *rôle* in life was to be an old maid.

"Come now, Kitty! You have a tremendous courage when you like. Pull yourself together. If Miss Patience is preaching political economy, tell her to go to the mischief. I am thinking of your eyes when you meet me—*at Limerick*. Will you be shy and coquettish? Or will you be imperious

and riding the high horse? I know you can be in any mood you choose; and the mood I would have you choose, is that of the Kitty of the old, beautiful, love-sweetened days, not this timid, fearing, business-like Kitty, whom I don't know a bit. Who wrote 'Just tell them there's a poor girl in Ireland, who is breaking her heart for your sake'? I know whatever troubles you may be thinking of now, everything will look quite bright and hopeful when I get hold of your shoulders and challenge your eyes to do anything but smile. So no more of your despondency, you pretty black-eyed tiny sweetheart; but one word, and the expenditure of one shilling; and then don't bother your head any more about it until you see me at Limerick. Then I will take command of you, and be responsible for you, and we will together make short work of your economical fears

"This from one who knows you and loves you far too well to believe in your want of courage; and who sends no other message, or kisses, or anything of the kind—for he is bringing them. W. F."

He went out, and walked rapidly to the pillar letter-box, and posted the letter; there seemed so little time to lose. And then he walked back more slowly, wondering if he had said everything likely to entice Kitty to a decision.

Just as he was entering the courtyard the postman came along with the second morning delivery; and he had two letters for Fitzgerald. Master Willie took them with little interest (for he was still thinking of the phrases he had used in the appeal sent over the sea) and opened them leisurely as he was going up the stair. And yet the first of these read oddly enough.

"DEAR MR. FITZGERALD—I wonder if you could spare me a few minutes to-morrow, Wednesday, evening, before you leave the house. Or, if that is inconvenient, any other evening will do; but to-morrow evening I am sure to be at home. I only want a few minutes' talk with you.

"Yours faithfully,

"MARY CHETWYND."

He could not imagine what Miss Chetwynd could have to say to him; but as nothing further was to be made out of the letter, he put it in his pocket. The next that he opened was written on the note-paper of a hotel in Venice.

"DEAR FITZ—It is an age since I heard anything of you; and I have seen so few English periodicals that I have no means of telling how you are getting on. Well, I hope; you have enthusiasm; good health; and an insatiable thirst for work; Pactolus will flow your way sooner or later. The beast of a stream doesn't flow my way; quite the reverse; it flies at my approach; hence these tears. The fact is I am temporarily very hard up, and awkwardly situated, as well—I can't explain, but you may guess; and so, to get out of these embarrassments, I have taken a liberty which I know you won't mind, for it can't cause you any inconvenience. I have drawn a bill on you at three months for £150: and if you would have the good-nature to accept it on presentation, you will do me a great service; and of course you will suffer no harm, for it will be taken up long before that. It is merely the use of your signature for a few weeks that I want; and I sha'n't forget your friendliness; *on connaît l'ami au besoin.*

"How is the Lady Irmingarde; and how are the little ringlets round her ears? Be a good boy; and marry the young damsel decently and honourably before the *fides pudica*—I do not write *Punica* and mean no such thing—begins to show the strain of time and distance; and then you will settle down into proper domestic ways; and run no risk of getting into scrapes, either at home or abroad. I hope Gifford gives you plenty to do; two guineas are much too little; but I suppose you make it help. Scobell has turned out to be a mean fellow; I always suspected guinea-pigs.

"Yours faithfully,
"HILTON CLARKE."

He went down the steps again and knocked at Ross's door.

"Come in!"

He entered and found the Scotchman smoking an after-

breakfast pipe, seated opposite a picture and staring at it; but with neither brushes nor palette in his hand.

"There!" said Fitzgerald, triumphantly handing him the letter. "Didn't I tell you so?"

Ross read the letter through deliberately, and handed it back.

"Well?" said he, "I always thought him a scoundrel. Now I think him an impudent scoundrel. What more?"

"I tell you he is nothing of the kind!" said Fitzgerald, indignantly. "Don't you see from that letter that he does not think he has done me any injury? I told you so. I told you there were people who otherwise might be admirable enough, but who simply wanted that sixth sense about money matters——"

"That sixth sense!" said Ross, angrily. "And did not I tell you not to go and confuse things by calling common honesty a sixth sense? If a scoundrel in the street picks my pocket, I do not think about any sixth sense; I give him into the hands of the nearest policeman."

"But you Scotchmen are too literal, and so exacting. You won't believe in a man having any virtues, unless he has them all. Now this man was exceedingly good-natured; he was very friendly to me; I am certain he does not think at this minute that he did me any wrong; he simply has no conscientiousness on that one point——"

"It's a want of conscientiousness that has landed many a poor wretch in jail, who had far greater excuses than that idling selfish creature," said John Ross. "Man, I thought he had opened your een. I thought it was the one good turn he had done ye. I thought he had given ye a lesson. And now, I suppose, ye'll go and sign this bill; and you'll believe he'll pay it; and the end will be—ten pounds to one is the bet I will put on it—I'm saying I will bet ten pounds to five shillings—that not one farthing of that money will come out of anybody's pocket but your own, if ye put your name on the back of the paper."

He knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and continued, still more angrily—

"Man, ye do not deserve to have a young lass waiting for ye—away over there in Ireland, waiting for ye—and

you to talk about throwing away your money on a scoundrel like that——"

"But wait a minute, Ross: I'm not going to do anything of the kind. I would not accept a bill, or back it—the fact is, I don't know what the proper phrase is—for any human being. I've seen the results of it over in our district; the Coursing Club showed me that. And indeed," added Fitzgerald, going forward to look at the picture, "I may soon have need of all the money I can get. There is just a—a—possibility of my setting up house, in a small way, by-and-by."

"Ay? Well, that's better news. That's sensible. But don't turn the mill too hard. You were at work early this morning."

"At work?" said Fitzgerald, staring, "I have not been at work at all. I haven't had any breakfast yet, by the way."

"Then what was all that stamping up and down for?—I thought ye were hammering out an epic poem."

"Oh," said Fitzgerald, vaguely remembering that he might have paced up and down the room in his eagerness to get persuasive phrases. "I was only writing a letter."

"It must have been a terrible business," said the other, grimly.

"So it is," said Fitzgerald, perhaps a trifle absently, "to convince one who is at a great distance from you, in a letter. It is difficult—and disheartening at times."

Ross glanced at him keenly.

'Things are not going quite right, then?" said he.

"Oh yes," answered Fitzgerald, with a forced cheerfulness. "Oh yes. Quite right. Oh yes, I think everything is going quite right; and by-and-by I hope you will soon have the opportunity for presenting the Wedgwood tea-cups with a pretty speech. Of course, letter-writing is a roundabout kind of way of arranging anything; it is difficult to explain and to persuade; and one is so apt to take wrong impressions from a letter. Especially a girl, you see, who is nervous and anxious, and afraid to trust her own judgment in taking a decided step. Any one can understand that. Then—then—then it is very hard

and difficult to write, you see; for if you are too serious, she may think you are alarmed, and she may prefer the safety of remaining as she is; and again, if you are too cheerful in trying to raise her spirits, she may think that the immediate necessity for coming to a decision cannot possibly be near. It is so much better to see the—the person. But this time, Ross—I don't mind telling you—I have made a very definite proposal. I should not wonder if I were to leave London this very week—and come back with a wife."

"Good luck to ye, then. Now I can understand there's no fear o' your letting that fellow have any more o' your money."

"Of course," said Fitzgerald, handing him the other letter, "that may have something to do with it."

Ross glanced over Miss Chetwynd's brief note.

"Whatever the matter is, it is important," said Fitzgerald. "She has never asked me to see her like that before. Perhaps they are tired of the present arrangement. Perhaps they think it costs too much; or they may want to have some one else. Well, well," said he, more cheerfully, "if it is so, let it be so. One can live somehow. I am not going to break my heart about that."

"Are ye coming out for a stroll then?"

"Indeed no. I am going to get some breakfast; and then set to work on another article on the Irish Ballads. It's wonderful with what heart you work when you know the work is going to be paid for."

"It's no a common experience wi' me," said Ross, drily.

Fitzgerald was whistling to himself as he went up the steps again. It was not the possibility of his losing that chief means of livelihood that could daunt him. Now his mind was full of far other concerns; and he was forcing himself to believe the best. When was the white day to come? At Limerick, at Inchigeelah, on the Blackwater, on the Shannon, he and she together would think but little of what had happened or might happen in London. Might they not find a four-leaved shamrock somewhere in the still summer woods?

He worked away at this essay on the Irish Ballads with

great apparent cheerfulness. When he stamped up and down, as was his wont, sometimes he hummed the air of one or other of the old songs he was transcribing. But when he came to "Kathleen O'More"—"My own little Kathleen, my poor little Kathleen, my Kathleen O'More"—he did not get on so quickly. Perhaps there was some chance association—or the bit of likeness between the names; but it seemed difficult to him to copy these lines. And at last the pen was pushed aside, and his head fell forward on his clasped hands.

* * * * *

Why was Kitty at Killarney; and why was she so cold, and speaking in a voice that seemed far away and strange, and not close, and tender, and familiar, as in the old and happy time? She could not have forgotten Inisheen!

CHAPTER XXI.

IMAGININGS.

It was without concern or apprehension of any kind that he went up on this evening to Hyde Park Gardens. He cared not what might happen in that direction. He was scarcely thinking of it.

As usual on reaching the house he left his hat and coat in the hall, and carried his bundle of books and newspapers upstairs to the drawing-room; but, to his surprise, found no one there. So he deposited the literature on the table, and went and stood before the fire—an institution retained in this house, for the mere sake of cheerfulness, long after the early summer warmth had set in; and stared into the shifting and flickering lights as if he could find something behind them. There was an absolute silence in the room.

Then a slight noise startled him from his reverie, and, turning, he found Mary Chetwynd approaching him, with a pleasant smile on her face.

"Good evening, Mr. Fitzgerald," said the tall young lady with the pretty head and the clear eyes.

"Good evening," said he, very respectfully.

"Auntie's compliments, and she is very sorry she can't see you this evening. She has caught a bad cold, and the doctor has ordered her to keep to her room for a couple of days. Won't you sit down?"

As Miss Chetwynd gave him this invitation, she herself passed over to an easy-chair near the fire. What perfect self-possession she had! Everything she did or said seemed to come to her so simply and naturally. When

he observed this quiet and serious dignity and grace of manner, he could not but think of Kitty's will-o'-the-wisp flashes of petulance, and affection, and coyness; but it was with no conscious desire to draw any comparison. Kitty was to him the one woman in the world; there was "none like her, none."

"I hope it is nothing serious?" said he.

"Oh dear no. Not in the least. In fact, I am wicked enough to look on it as opportune, for now I can speak to you freely for a few minutes, if you will give me so much of your time; and I must tell you that I have a great favour to ask of you, and that I am rather frightened that I may not put my petition before you properly."

She did not look frightened. She spoke pleasantly; and there was a sort of smile in her eyes.

"Perhaps I may be able to spare you some embarrassment, Miss Chetwynd," said he, "if I guess what you want to say——"

"I don't think you could do that, exactly," was the answer.

"Only this," he said, with indifference, "if you have any friend you wish to put into my position here, I hope you won't think twice about saying so——"

"Oh, but that is not it at all," she said, promptly. "Who could fill your position? Who could give dear old auntie that interest in everyday life that seemed to be going away from her altogether? Indeed, Mr. Fitzgerald, I am very grateful to you—we all are. You have made my aunt quite chatty and talkative again; and what she talks most about is yourself, and your writings, and your friend the Scotch artist. Oh, that would never do."

At another time Fitzgerald would have been glad enough to hear this frank and kindly speech; for he had not guessed that this was the light in which she regarded the situation. But on this evening, somehow, his thoughts were elsewhere; he was indifferent as to what might happen to him with regard to this post of his; there was a weight on his heart—he knew not why.

"You have often heard auntie speak of Boat of Garry?"

"Yes," said Fitzgerald, with a sudden awakening of

interest. For now she was three hundred miles and more nearer his thoughts.

"That is what I want to speak to you about, then; and I shall have to make some explanations before I put my request before you. No doubt you know that auntie, who is generosity itself, made a present of the whole place—just as it stood—horses and carriages and so forth, everything, indeed—to my poor brother."

"Oh yes, I know that," said Fitzgerald, who had heard a good deal about this place on Bantry Bay from one source or another, and had even imbibed the preposterous notion that Miss Chetwynd had wanted to turn him into a bailiff or steward or something of the kind.

"Fortunately my poor brother was pretty well off," she continued, "and so he could keep up the place; though hunting was his favourite amusement, and he always spent the winter in England. But the summer and autumn he usually spent at Boat of Garry; and sometimes auntie and I went over and stayed for a while. Those were very happy days for the dear old lady; for she quite worshipped her boy, as she called him, and she was so proud to see him go about over his own place. Her kindness to him was beyond anything you can imagine. I don't know whether she has ever told you, but she is dreadfully afraid of the sea——"

"I guessed as much from one or two things she has said," Fitzgerald answered.

"I think she was nearly drowned when a girl, or something like that. However, she detests being on the water. And yet she went and bought a small steam-launch for Frank—for the place is rather out of the way; and she used to control her nerves and go on board that detestable boat—yes, and drag me too—and pretend to be quite delighted when we went roaring and puffing through the beautiful quiet scenery up by Glengariff, or darted about Bearhaven, threatening collisions on every hand. What I thought of these excursions I need not tell you——"

"I don't know much about steam-launches; but I should think ladies would not care much for them."

That was what he said; what he was thinking of was

Glengariff. Had Kitty and Miss Patience passed that way? Were the roses out in the hedgerows yet? Had they walked along the shore in the twilight? Had she tried the piano in the drawing-room later on? Did the people know who she was? Had she sung for them? Why had she not written?

"Then after the—the dreadful accident," said Miss Chetwynd, and for a moment she looked aside somewhat,—"you have heard about that too, I suppose—when poor Frank was taken from us—I thought auntie would never recover. Her interest in life seemed to be completely gone. But what she insisted on was that Boat of Garry should be left exactly as my poor brother had left it. Nothing was to be touched. You see, the property reverted to her; and she could not bear the idea of going there; and still less the idea of selling it; and so she said it should remain exactly as Frank left it. And so it has remained, from that day to this."

She heaved a little sigh.

"That is the sad part of the story. Perhaps you knew most of it. And now I come to the request I have to make of you, Mr. Fitzgerald, and it is a very plain and unsentimental one. I really think it a pity that a property like that should be allowed to remain absolutely useless; and I am not sure that auntie would not think so also, if some change could be made gradually. I don't actually wish that she should sell the place, for it has been a long time in the possession of her side of the family; besides, it has associations for both of us. It is a long time now since my poor brother was killed; and—and, if I may hint as much again—since my aunt made your acquaintance she has been much more like her former self, and less given to that moping she gave way to for a time. Now don't you yourself think it a pity that a place like that over at Bantry should be allowed to exist without being of use to a single soul?"

"It does seem so," said Fitzgerald. "But does no one occupy it?"

"No; that is the absurdity of it—well, why should I call it an absurdity when it was only a testimony to the poor old lady's grief? No one occupies it. We have to

pay—at least, my aunt pays—for keeping up the whole establishment; and all that we get from it is a hamper of game now and again in the autumn, or a salmon. There the whole place is—horses, a coachman, a gamekeeper, a yachtsman, and two women-servants; and I suppose the only person who makes any use of the place is Mr. M'Gee, the solicitor in Bantry, for when he goes round to pay the wages, and that, I suppose he has some shooting, or a sail in a steam-launch. I proposed some time ago to my aunt that she should at least bring the horses and carriages to London; but when poor old auntie said nothing at all, but only turned away to hide the tears in her eyes, what further could I urge? You see, they were his horses. He was proud of them. So with the steam-launch. She would not hear of its being sold. In fact, for a long time, any reference to the place was so distressing to her, that I did not even mention it—except when I had to draw out a cheque for Mr. M'Gee, and then it was simply, 'Auntie, dear, Mr. M'Gee wants so much.' You may think all this an absurd piece of sentiment—perhaps it is; but then, you see, I am Frank's sister; and I know how kind my aunt was to him; and if she has still this feeling about preserving intact what belonged to him, I don't find it altogether ridiculous."

"I hope not," said Fitzgerald, gently. He thought she spoke very prettily about this matter. He should not have thought she had so much sympathy.

"But now," she said, "now that time has gone by, and auntie seems a little more cheerful, I think some effort should be made to get some good out of the place. I don't know that I am very penurious; but I assure you I do grudge to have to draw out cheques to keep up a perfectly useless place like that. Perhaps it is because I see a good deal of want and trouble and misery that my conscience rebels against throwing away money like that."

"Surely you are quite right," said Fitzgerald—though he did not quite know why he should be appealed to. "If Mrs. Chetwynd does not wish to sell the place; and if it would be painful for her to go and live in it, why might she not let it? If the shooting is fair, it ought to let. The neighbourhood is pretty enough."

"That is what I think too," said Mary Chetwynd, with that placid intelligent smile of hers. "But the only person who could induce her to let the place, and so save all this expense, is yourself, Mr. Fitzgerald; and now you know why I have ventured to ask you to do me a great favour."

"I? What could I do about it?" he exclaimed.

"If I were to go now and ask auntie to let Boat of Garry," said Miss Chetwynd, "she would think me very cruel and hard-hearted. The idea of turning in a stranger to succeed to poor Frank's dog-cart, and his gun-room, and the little cabin in the steam-yacht—that would be quite terrible to her. But she might get accustomed to the idea. She would not mind your going over and occupying the place. She has a great regard for you. You are about Frank's age; you know about shooting; it would seem natural enough to her that you should go over and live at Boat of Garry for a time. That once done, the rest would be easy. There would be no difficulty about persuading her to let it next year to one or other of our friends—some of the scientifics, as she calls them, are very fond of shooting. I know I am asking a great deal," she continued quickly, for she saw that he looked rather astonished. "You are making your way in literature, and this looks as if you might be taken away from that for a considerable time. But would it be so? I cannot imagine any place better fitted for literary work, unless, indeed, you found it really too solitary; and then you could send across to Bantry, and you may be sure that Mr. M'Gee, who is a sporting character, would be only too glad to join you. Then, again—you see, Mr. Fitzgerald," she said, with a laugh, "I have to begin by persuading you, and if I fail with you, I am done altogether—you would have the kind of holiday that would just suit you, according to all accounts. You would have fishing, shooting, and boating—in a sort of country that you are familiar with. You have been very close at work, I should judge, since you came to London. You have scarcely ever been out of London."

"But," said he, in rather a bewildered way, "do you

mean this? Is it an actual proposal—that I should go to Ireland now?"

"Oh no; not at all," she said pleasantly. "It is only a project of mine. My prayer to you is that if auntie should suggest your going over to Ireland, and taking your holiday in that way, you won't refuse. I have put the whole situation of affairs before you; and if you cared to take your holiday that way, it would be, as you see, conferring a great obligation on us—and on me especially, for you would be helping me to carry out my plan."

It was a prospect that ought to have been alluring enough to a young man of his habits and occupations. But he could not think of that now. There was something of far greater import to him and his future occupying his thoughts.

"You mean this year?" he says. "Now?"

"I am not sure about 'now,'" she said. "Well, say 'now,' or as soon as I can get my aunt coaxed to make the suggestion. The salmon-fishing has begun, has it not?"

"I am sorry," said he, rather breathlessly, "but—but I may be called away to Ireland on important affairs within the very next few days—I could not pledge myself with any certainty——"

And then a wild idea occurred to him—an idea that sent the blood rushing to his brain. What if the two excursions could be combined? What if he were to take Kitty to Boat of Garry instead of to Inisheen? Here, indeed, was a project! Poor Kitty, whose imagination had been bothered by vain dreams of driving a carriage and pair!—here was the very carriage and pair provided for her, and the quietest of country residences for the honeymoon, and a yacht at her disposal, and servants and all awaiting her! Could anything be more opportune? Was there ever such a coincidence in human history? Of course he knew that great people frequently lent their country seat to a bridegroom and bride as a safe and pleasant retreat during the honeymoon; but that he and Kitty should be suddenly and unexpectedly provided with this paradise down by the sea—that, surely, was a thing that

never could have entered her brain, even when she was dreaming of the bliss of having a carriage and pair, and being rich, and driving through pretty scenery. Moreover, would it not be a great inducement for her to fix a definite time? Could she withstand the pictures he would draw of this happy and secret retirement there?

"But," said he, quickly, "did you mean that it was necessary that I should go to Boat of Garry alone?"

"Alone? Not at all," said she. "I spoke of your being there alone in case you might want to continue your literary work. Of course, I don't think I could induce auntie to let you take with you, although you are a great favourite of hers, a big party of strangers——"

"Oh, I don't mean that at all," said Fitzgerald, hastily; his brain was painting pictures with such vivid colours as John Ross never squeezed out of any tin tube.

"It would be a great favour to me," continued Miss Chetwynd, seeing that he was now considering her scheme, "and it would be a pleasant holiday for you, and it would be doing a service to poor old auntie. She would see that very soon. The present state of affairs could not possibly continue; and I am sure, once the gradual change was made, she would be the first to acknowledge that it was right. To tell you the truth, Mr. Fitzgerald, I was once a little afraid of that fixed idea of hers. I did not like it, especially when she was alone, her melancholy seemed to get so morbid and hopeless. But now that she has come back to the old interest in everyday affairs, surely now is the time to get her to give up this too sensitive repugnance of hers to having Boat of Garry touched in any way; and I don't see any one else who can do it so easily as you. I do not know whether it has occurred to you," she continued—and for the first time she showed a little embarrassment—"but I think my aunt wishes to put you, as far as is now possible, in Frank's place—I mean in her little world of friendships and interests; and sometimes I am quite startled, when I come into the room accidentally, to hear her chatting to you in exactly the same tone she used to use to him. She thinks you are exactly his height; but you are an inch and a half taller—two inches, perhaps.

And dear old auntie forgets a little; and now she thinks that poor Frank was just as fond of books and writing and poetry and all that as you are, whereas there was nothing Frank hated so much as a book, except "British Rural Sports," and Colonel Hawker's volume, and the *Field*, on Sunday morning. You won't find much of a library at Boat of Garry, if you go there. Do you think it is hard of me to speak of my dead brother like that? Sometimes I think I have less than my share of natural affection, when I find I can't quite believe all that poor old auntie believes about him. And yet I was very fond of him. The world seemed quite changed for me when he died; there seemed to be no one with whom I ever could be so intimate; and who did me so much good in talking plain common sense when I was inclined to attempt impossible things. And yet when I find how common such sorrows are, I sometimes think that I grieve too much; and that I should try not to think about him at all; but to go on with my work, such as it is, and let everything be for the best. Only the world seemed to get so empty when he was taken away from us. I cared more for his approval than for anybody's, although he was not clever. I could not bear his laughing at me. I used to go out with him when he went shooting, though the cry of a hare when it was struck cut my heart like a knife. The smallest present he made me was of more value than anything anybody else could give me. He used to call me his 'little girl,' though I was very nearly as tall as he was. And—and although I am not very sentimental—still, to tell you the truth, Mr. Fitzgerald, I should not like the idea—not just yet—of your taking a big party of strangers to—to—Frank's house."

"Oh, of course not," said he, instantly. "I did not dream of such a thing."

She was a little tremulous about the lips—only for a second.

"If any one went with me," said he, thinking it better she should know the truth, "it would be my wife."

"But you are not married, Mr. Fitzgerald?" she exclaimed, with wonder in her eyes.

"No——"

"But you are going to be?" she said, with a quick interest.

Then her eyes dropped.

"I beg your pardon. I really beg your pardon," she said, as she rose. "I have taken up so much of your time. You ought to have stopped my chatter. Well, may I assume that you are my accomplice?"

"Miss Chetwynd," said he, with a smile, "I have a suspicion that your ways are very like your aunt's ways, and that you contrive kindnesses under the guise of begging for a favour."

"On the contrary," she said, as she gave him her hand, "my motives are distinctly mercenary. I don't want that money to be thrown away from year to year for nothing; and I ask for your help. At the same time I am not saying that you might not have a pleasant holiday there. Good-night, and thank you so much."

Even in his eager haste to get outside and consider all the bearings of this new proposal that he would lay before Kitty, he could not but carry away with him a pleasant impression from this little interview. Mary Chetwynd had been so gentle, so kind, and serious, and true in manner, so good an example (as he thought) of an accomplished, and amiable, and frank young English gentlewoman, that he had a little remorse about it all. Perhaps he had misunderstood her somewhat. It did not appear that her heart had been altogether hardened by scornful knowledge: what if there were no such deadly antagonism, after all, between sentiment and science? How nicely she had spoken of old Mrs. Chetwynd: what true affection breathed in her little simple sentences about her brother! Even that bit of embarrassment seemed so womanly; she had instantly withdrawn her questions for fear of giving offence. And if she were to prove the means of putting this great happiness within the reach of Kitty and himself, would he not seek some opportunity in the future to show that he was not altogether insensible of her kindness?

But the immediate thing was to let Kitty know. He was so anxious to put any additional inducement before her; and certainly this one—as his quick imagination

pictured it—was of sufficient value. But would it appeal in like measure to Kitty? Would she be able to see all those fascinating glimpses of their life together in the house by the sea that now crowded in on his mind? What a pity it was he had not been able to add this temptation to his letter of that morning! No matter; by the time she reached Limerick both letters would probably be awaiting her at the post office.

Then in his impatience he walked to a telegraph office, and sent off this message to her: "If you are remaining at Killarney, ask letters to be forwarded from Limerick. Do not answer first letter till you get second. Telegraph if this reached."

This second letter was the one that he was now hurrying home to write. And these were bright-coloured pictures that he saw before him in the gray dusk of the evening—as he went rapidly along the London streets. He somewhat forced himself to think of them. There was something else he would not think of—that he put away. This was the immediate question: whether Kitty also would not be fascinated by these new possibilities? Had she already had a passing glance at the beauties of Glengariff?—then she would know the sort of country through which she could have her daily drives in that coveted carriage and pair. Would she come part of the way up the hill in the evening to meet him on his return from the shooting? Would she take a book with her and sit on the river bank, among the warm grass and the meadow-sweet, while with a big sweep of the rod he dropped the great salmon fly into the deep and distant pool? And then he knew that Kitty would jump up with a shriek of delight when the struggle began; and she would watch with wide eyes the rushes and the sharp and dangerous leaps of the big fish; and by-and-by, when victory was becoming sure, would she stand by his side with the gaff ready to his hand? For one thing, Kitty was not the best of sailors. But then you could so quickly run back again in a steam-launch if there was anything like a sea on outside; and no doubt still days would occur on which she might—all by herself, as it were—imagine Kitty in sole

command of a steamer—sail all the way around by Dursey Head into Kenmare River, while he shot across the Slieve Miskish heights, if the Boat of Garry shootings extended so far. And then to think of his being away up there in the wilderness of rock and heather; and far below him the little toy steamer; and the tiniest figure sitting in the stern, reading. Can the dog-whistle reach as far? Or the view halloo of the keeper to the engine-man? Or is it Kitty herself who first catches sight of them; and starts up, and waves a handkerchief? It is almost a race down the hill at last; and then the little boat is sent ashore; and they are pulled out to the small steamer; and the birds and the big brown hares are all laid out on deck. And then away to sea again in the golden evening; with the long headlands growing warmer in colour as the sun sinks; and the Atlantic murmuring all along the solitary coasts. Would there be a piano at Boat of Garry? Or would their evenings be spent out of doors, mostly, until the stars began to be visible over the trees? Kitty was fond of the darkness and of silence; they would hear the curlews calling along the shore as they went home through the meadows.

It was of Kitty at Boat of Garry, not of Kitty at Killarney, that he forced himself to think. Also he persuaded himself that this way of spending the honeymoon would be a very inexpensive one. Kitty must admit that. There would be no hotel bills; no costs by road or rail. Kitty was almost in the neighbourhood; the travelling would be nothing. Would it be asking too much that the carriage should meet them at Kenmare, to take them up and over the gaunt mountain road until they descended into the leafy woods of Glengariff? No doubt the horses would be the better for some good stiff work now; it was far from probable that the coachman had taken them out for regular exercise, in a place where there was no master.

These points and many more were put before Kitty in this second letter. It was a very matter-of-fact letter. It assumed that Kitty would be as delighted as himself with this opportune proposal. Why should he implore and

beseech?—would not his faithful Kitty rejoice as he rejoiced, to see their dearest hopes within easy reach of fulfilment? And it behoved him to be very business-like now. Kitty need not be afraid of the cost of the wedding; the simpler the better. And if he disingenuously omitted to mention all the minute points of the case—if, without being guilty of any misstatement whatsoever, he still left it possible for Kitty to imagine that this proposal that they should occupy Boat of Garry had been made by the Chetwynds with especial reference to her marriage-trip—what harm was there in Kitty innocently believing that these two ladies wished to be kind to her?

So he went and posted that letter too. All that he could do he had done. Then he walked back to the courtyard; found John Ross at home; and the rest of the evening was spent in the Scotchman's studio.

For Fitzgerald had grown half-afraid of sitting by himself in the solitary room upstairs. Sometimes strange imaginings would flash across his brain—fears that took his breath away—that were hateful and horrible—that were as unworthy of himself as they were cruel to the true-hearted and tender-eyed Kitty, who was so far away, with no one to speak for her innocence and honour and faith, if he should dare to doubt.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE REVELATION.

THE days passed; no message of any kind, no letter, no telegram, came to these poor lodgings in the Fulham Road. No work was possible for him. He kept pacing up and down the room, listening for the postman; or idly wandering through the streets of Chelsea, always certain that her reply would be awaiting him there on his return. If he thought of anything, it was of how he and she together would occupy the mornings, and days, and long summer evenings, at Boat of Garry. His eyes were turned to the south. He seemed to keep his face averted from Killarney. Limerick was a blank to him.

He tried to avoid John Ross; but Ross was not to be avoided. He came upstairs; regarded Fitzgerald for a second; looked suspiciously round—as was his wont, indeed, for his eyes seemed to take in everything; and forthwith drove his neighbour down into the studio, where Fitzgerald found that a sumptuous supper (according to their notions down that way) had been prepared for two.

"I have watched ye, my man," said Ross, "once or twice of late. Ye are at it again."

"At what?"

"Starving yourself."

"Indeed I am not. Why should I starve myself when I have four pounds a week, with chances of more?"

Ross muttered something to himself, as he brought one or two further articles to the supper-table. Then he fetched a bottle of beer for his companion; and they both sat down.

Fitzgerald began to talk about a railway accident that had happened the previous day; but Ross had other thoughts in his mind.

"Ye are not starving yourself, then?" said he, glancing at his neighbour.

"Not in the least."

"Ye are not looking well, then. Ye keep too much indoors; and too much in town. Ye'll forget what the country is like if ye go on like this; and fine leeterature you'll turn out then!—leeterature with a white face and bloodless hands. What the mischief do ye mean?" he exclaimed suddenly. "No meat?"

Fitzgerald had pushed his plate away, and was merely playing with a bit of crust.

"I had something," he said evasively.

"When?"

"Oh, not very long ago."

"When?" said the other.

"Well, about the middle of the day."

"And so ye have got yourself into the habit of eating nothing after two o'clock?"

He himself was busy enough. For a time Fitzgerald had all the talking. What he talked about was merely the current news of the papers.

"There's an article I would like to see ye write; ye might do some good wi't," said Ross at length.

"What do you charge for supplying subjects to poor authors?"

"Oh, but it's no for fine leeterary treatment, this. It's a sledge-hammer ye want, to smash down a piece of meeserable hypocrisy. I want ye to denounce the perneecious sympathy that ye find expressed in books—and mostly in weemen's books, I may say—for the genteel folk who are 'Keeping up appearances,' and for the trouble they suffer in consequence. Lord save us, these are the people we are to sympathise wi'—people whose vanity makes them live at eight hundred pounds a year when they have only five hundred pounds; and it's a 'proper pride;' and they're doing the best for the family. A proper pride!—it's a proper pride that must suffer some stings, I should think,

when the unpaid tradesmen come ringing at the door. And then the way they are described as peetying themselves, and sighing with resignation over their struggles, just as if God had decreed them to have hired broughams, and dinner-parties, and their daughters at boarding-schools, and what not; and as if their no being able to settle their bills was something they could not make out! No; it is their right to live in such a way; it never occurs to them that if they have five hundred pounds a year, they'd better live on that, or less; they have to keep up appearances, and you and me are expected to have a great peety for all they suffer through their perneecious vanity and pretence. If they choose to live beyond their income, let them smart for it! —why should I peety them? I peety the butchers and greengrocers that they plunder; or, worse still, that they leave so long unpaid that the poor man, for want of ready money, is forced to take to over-charging and trade dodges, and in a measure becomes a thief. Now I am told," said he, fixing his keen eyes on Fitzgerald for a second, "that you Irish are rayther given to that keeping up of appearances—that is to say, living at a rate ye cannot properly afford."

Fitzgerald suspected as much. These homilies of Ross's generally ended with a personal application.

"Some of the small squireens are pretty much given that way," he said, "but I suppose you'll find about an equal amount of pretentiousness everywhere among the poor genteel. It isn't easy for them to give up the way of living they have been used to."

"But it's the beginning, my lad!" said the other. "It's the beginning to live beyond your means that's the mischief. Now, you, for example; how are you going to begin?"

"I told you. In two small rooms, I hope, at perhaps eight or ten shillings a week. Then we shall look about for a house."

"What size?"

"Small. But I know what you are thinking of, Ross; and there's no use beating about the bush. You are thinking that I am starving myself, being too keen in saving up money; and that this probably means that I shall start

housekeeping in too expensive a way. I think that is about what you are afraid of."

"It is," said the other, promptly. "You have just hit it. I cannot understand the use of such violent means. I take it that when two young people get married they should accommodate themselves reasonably and fairly to their income—not starving yourself, laddie!—and when circumstances improve, let their expenditure grow. But if ye begin at the beginning with a vain pretence of genteelity, and get into trouble, do ye expect I am going to peety ye? Not one jot."

"No, what you would do would be to lend us money," said Fitzgerald, who knew the ways of this person. "But there's no starvation in the case—not the least."

"Then what is the matter with ye? Where got ye that grayness in the face?" said his friend, whose eyes missed nothing.

"I have been working hard," said the other, evasively, "and been anxious a little about one or two things."

"I wish ye could bring that young lass over here and marry her straight off," said Ross, bluntly.

"That may not be so far away," was Fitzgerald's answer; and his friend—though he waited for a second, regarding him, as if he expected him to say more—accepted Fitzgerald's silence, and forebore to press him with any question.

Next morning there was again neither letter nor telegram. This suspense was more than he could bear. He hastily went to the telegraph-office, and sent messages both to Killarney and Limerick, asking whether she had not received his communications; more than that, he telegraphed to the post-master at Limerick, asking to be informed whether letters addressed to Miss Romayne had been sent or called for.

The day passed somehow; there was no answer. And now he made sure she could be neither at Killarney nor at Limerick; and a thousand conjectures filled his anxious mind as to what might have happened. He went back over her letters. There she had used the phrase "make our way" to Limerick; and it occurred to him that, instead of coming back by rail to Mallow and so getting north, it

was just possible she and Miss Patience might have tried to get round by Tralee and Listowel, taking the stage-coaches. And although they were both pretty experienced travellers, who could tell what slight misadventure might not have detained them somewhere in these western wilds? It was the only possible explanation of Kitty's silence. And again he convinced himself that there could not have been any serious accident; or that would have found its way to the papers. That truant Kitty, to go and lose herself among these Kerry mountains!

Then, when he was least expecting it, there came to him a letter—or brief note, rather.

"Killarney, Thursday morning.

"DEAR WILLIE—You drive me to say that you are very inconsiderate in worrying me with these constant letters and telegrams. I meet with so much consideration and kindness on every hand that it is all the more surprising to find you so exacting and impatient. That would not seem a pleasing prospect to any one. I have not sent for your letters to the Limerick post office; because there would not be time; we leave here to-morrow; and do not go to Limerick, the engagement being cancelled. But I dare-say I know what is in them; and I am rather tired of arguing. Besides, you do not seem to think of anything but your own wishes. How could I turn adrift Miss Patience, who has no means of livelihood whatever? She has been most faithful and good and kind to me; and, of course, I could not send her away without making some provision for her. I am sure I wish to please every one—especially those who have been *very kind* to me; but it is sometimes so distracting to try to please everybody that sometimes I don't know what I may not do. But please be a little forbearing with me; you are so impetuous.

"Your affectionate KITTY."

He stared at the letter in dumb amazement. Was it really Kitty who had written that? Was it the Kitty with whom he had walked arm-in-arm through the hawthorn lanes on the Sunday mornings—who could find no speech soft

enough, no caressings endearing enough, no words of love true, and close, and near enough, for him—who was now reproaching him with his want of consideration and taunting him with the suggestion that others were kinder than he? Was it possible for a woman's heart to change so? He would not look at the intermediate time; he would not think of the gathering coldness of the last six or eight months' letters; it was the Kitty of Inisheen that he was thinking of—it was the Kitty who had stretched her warm, trembling little hand to him, across the stream down in the darkness, and repeated the pledge that gave each to the other, and looked up and kissed him when the lovers' vows were over. Was this the same Kitty?

But she could not have changed so. He would not believe it. Kitty had been put out of temper by something; and at such times she wrote hurriedly, a little incoherently, sometimes heedless of her grammar even. What he would do would be to take the matter in his own hands. He would go and get hold of Kitty herself—that was the first thing. Once he had a grip of her small, warm fingers, he should feel safe. Poor lass, she had become petulant through being left so much alone. He would press back the hair from her forehead, and smile away the evil spirit from her eyes.

But it suddenly struck him that she had not said where she was going. Was he to lose all clue to her whereabouts, then? Was she to remain for an indefinite time in this petulant mood? Then a strange sort of fear—that seemed to go through his heart like a red-hot wire—stabbed him, as it were; and in a blind and bewildered way he went down the stairs, and went in to Ross's studio.

"Ross," said he—and Ross certainly stared at him, for his manner was unusual, "I wouldn't show you a love-letter; but this isn't much of a love-letter. I wish you would look at it and tell me what you think."

He seemed rather breathless.

"Have you had any quarrel?" said John Ross, when he had read the letter slowly and carefully.

"Quarrel? Not a shadow of a quarrel!" he said eagerly.

"Will I tell ye what I think?" said his friend, watching his expression closely.

"Why not? Why not? That's what I want."

"I think that young lass is going to marry another man."

Fitzgerald reached out his hand, and took back the letter.

"You are quite wrong," he said quietly, but with his face very gray and haggard. "You are quite mistaken about that. You don't know my—my darling."

He went away without another word; and Ross knew enough not to follow him.

His faithfulness fought on to the end. He would not believe it. It was not in human nature. The heart of a woman could not be so treacherous. It was not possible for the Kitty whom he had clasped to his breast on the shore there at Inisheen—when her face was wet with tears in the moonlight—it was not possible for that Kitty to be gaily smiling a love-smile into other eyes. He had heard her heart beat.

There came a letter:

"Dublin, Tuesday.

"DEAR MR. FITZGERALD—In the hurry of packing, I have been commissioned to acquaint you with a piece of news, which I fear will cause you some pain, though probably but little surprise. Miss Romayne is to be married to Mr. Cobbs to-morrow morning; and I believe they go to the Isle of Man afterwards, where Mr. Cobbs has some friends. For my part, I must say I am heartily glad of it; for, although Miss Romayne has always been kind to me, and remains so, her successive flirtations have only caused me embarrassment; and I have often been suspected of influencing her to favour this one or reject the other, when in truth I took no interest at all in such trivial matters. What I cannot help regretting is the £40 that will have to be paid to the Limerick people for her cancelling the engagement; but Mr. Cobbs has plenty of money, and probably they regard that as a small matter now. I have some things to send back to you; but cannot get a proper box before the morning. It shall be registered.—Yours sincerely, E. PATIENCE."

There was one word added to this letter—in another and trembling handwriting. It was in a corner. It was the word "*Forgive.*"

The drowning man, we have often been told, sees all the chief events of his life pass before him—a procession of clear and startling pictures—in time limited to seconds. This man saw wild and sudden visions too—as he bent forward his brow on his clasped hands—but these rapid, bewildering, heart-breaking scenes had always for their central figure a woman. All the rest of his life was forgotten. The beautiful pictures!—filled with the colour and sunlight of young love and hope; and ever in the midst of them—whether by sea or shore, in rocky glen or on the breezy hillside—some one laughing with parted lips and smiling with glad eyes. But then this other vision that would intrude: it was like the dreadful thing that Heine saw: "That was a merry bridal-feast—joyfully the guests sat at the table—but when I regarded the bridal pair—*Ah, God, my darling was the bride!*"

Was the blow unexpected, then? No. For days and weeks he had been living under the shadow of this nameless fear. It had been like a black cloud over him; he would not look at it; he tried to escape from it; he tried to argue it out of existence. He would not confess to a doubt of Kitty's honour and faith; had she not kissed him, by the side of the stream, where they had plighted their troth together?

And now he had nothing to say about perjured lips, or woman's deceit, or anything of the kind. The wound had struck deeper than that. It had struck at the very foundations of his faith in human nature. Rather vaguely and thoughtfully—for these pictures of Inisheen were still before his eyes—he got his hat and stick, and went out into the mild summer air. The day was fine; the people seemed busy. He only knew that life was over for him; that the world had nothing left for him—except, it might be, a few memories; he was without interest, or care, or hope—though the lad had scarcely touched his four-and-twentieth year.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"SIE TRAGEN ZU DIR, O GELIEBTE!"

It is mid-day on the first of June; the skies are clear; and this old-fashioned coach goes jolting, and rattling, and swinging away through the lonely country that lies between Drimoleague and Bantry Bay. The warm summer air is sweetened, now with the fragrance of the abundant honeysuckle, now with a whiff of peat-smoke from one of those poor stone hovels near the wayside. There are plenty of beautiful things to charm the eye of the traveller. There are masses of blue forget-me-nots in the marshy pools. The waste bog-land has its own rich hues; and these rude stone walls that enclose the miserable bit of farm or garden are surmounted by golden gorse. Even the far-reaching sterile hills, where the scant pasturage scarcely tints the barren rock, have their qualities of colour that a painter might observe. For the day is beautiful; the air is clear; and the sunshine falls so strongly that the shadows under the hedgerows or under a steep bank seem quite black—and not yet the opaque black that a palette would give—but a sensitive, deep-reaching, luminous blackness that reveals things within itself, and that is cut across, outside, by the sharp-pointed spears of the iris, a brilliant deep strong green in the sunlight.

The solitary passenger by this mail-coach regards these things with a minute and close and mechanical attention; perhaps he forces himself so to regard them. He has come through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, as it were; there is a black cloud behind him, and he durst

not look that way; he busies himself, and strives to busy himself, with the phenomena of the visible world around him. And while he fondly imagines that he is contemplating these phenomena with the calm and dispassionate eye of an artist—looking at the waste bog-land, and the poor hovels, and the sad far hills, with a view to guessing at their value in colour—in reality he is reading human sorrow, and the tragedy of human life, into every sight and sound that meets him.

But the first glimpse of the broad waters of Bantry Bay made his heart leap with pain. Visions and dreams that had occupied days not so far bygone seemed to dazzle his eyes—for a moment, but only for a moment. With a terrible effort he put them away. He would not confess to that quick sharp quiver at the heart. He was studying this beautiful picture as John Ross might have studied it. Look at the great width of the sea, with its armlets stretching in between the sunny browns and greens of the headlands. So still is the summer air, so calm and clear is the summer sky, that the blue of these far-reaching arms of water is a dull and almost opaque blue—a sort of sealing-wax blue—looking molten and heavy in the spaces between the wooded islands and the rocks. The hills on the other side, that stretch away out to the lonely Atlantic, seem desolate and uninhabited. It is a sad picture, despite the loveliness of the summer day. But if one wishes to lose oneself—to get away from the world—to seek out the secret haunts of nature, and find solace and forgetfulness there—surely these remote shores, these voiceless hills and glens, may afford a resting-place for the tortured soul?

He had to encounter strange faces at Glengariff. At the pretty hotel there, which from a distance seemed to be half-smothered among trees and flowers and shrubs, he found a number of the visitors sitting outside, some having afternoon tea at small tables, others playing chess, or smoking or chatting; and doubtless they would regard the new-comer with sufficient curiosity. No matter; he was soon inside; and there he asked if he might have a room for the night.

"Mr. Fitzgerald, I presume?" said the landlady.

"That is my name," said he, with some astonishment.

"A room has been kept for you," she said; and Fitzgerald could only ask himself why he had been astonished, for indeed the thoughtfulness and kindness of those Chetwynds went beyond all bounds.

"I suppose," said he, "I can get the Castletown mail-car in the morning?"

"But you won't need that, sir," said the good landlady, "for the carriage is coming from Boat of Garry for you at half-past ten, if that is convenient. I was to give you the message from Mr. M'Gee. Mr. M'Gee has been down to Boat of Garry to see that everything is in readiness for you; and I was to say that he was very sorry he could not stay to meet you here, as he had important business at Kenmare to-day."

"Oh, indeed."

"Visitors' book, sir," said a waiter, opening a large volume that lay on the hall table.

"Oh yes," said Fitzgerald, and he mechanically took the pen and wrote his name.

Then he lingered, glancing over the other names on the page, as is the fashion of new arrivals. He had his finger and thumb on the leaf, as if he meant to pursue this aimless enquiry; when all at once he seemed to recall himself; he shut the book hastily, and turned, as if afraid that some one had been watching him. Then he went to his room, and remained there until dinner-time. He sat at the open window, looking at the beautiful foliage, and listening to the birds; and trying to think of nothing but these. He would not confess to himself what sudden and frightful suspicion it was that had made him so hurriedly shut the visitors' book; nor yet would he ask what new weight this was on his heart—this terrible consciousness that, sooner or later, before he left the house, he would be irresistibly drawn to search those pages.

At dinner he sat next a vivacious little old gentleman with a thin dried pale face and a brown wig, an Englishman, whose pleasant chatting, if it was not very wise or profound, served to beguile the time. He gave Fitzgerald a vast

amount of information about the neighbourhood. He had his views also.

"What is the highest form of human happiness?" he asked abruptly.

"Killing a brace of ducks right and left," said Fitzgerald, for the sake of saying something.

"Oh no. These are violent enjoyments, and violent enjoyments are invariably accompanied by violent disappointments. It is the attainment of peace and content, which is only possible after the wild passions and pursuits of youth are over; and what does it depend on? Sound sleep, mostly. I mean to live to ninety."

"I am sure I hope you may," said his neighbour.

"I think I shall. I see no reason to the contrary," said the cheerful old gentleman. "I cultivate happiness and health at the same time; indeed, I find them to be the same thing. The only stimulant I allow myself in the day —the only thing that rises a little above the level—is the dinner hour. I permit myself that; and find no harm in it. Now when I was your age, I did as most young fellows did at that time—that is to say, without being a drunkard, I drank too much. A brandy and soda in the morning; a pint of claret at lunch; perhaps a glass of Madeira in the afternoon; then the usual wine at dinner. What was the result? There was no novelty in it. There was no pleasant stimulus. The system was too familiar with these repeated excitements. And so nowadays I drink nothing but tea or soda-water up till dinner-time; and then I have my pint of champagne; and my whole system enjoys this unwonted stimulus; and perhaps I may even grow talkative, eh?"

"But about the sound sleep—you have not told me how you secure that," said Fitzgerald. So long as this old gentleman would talk, he was glad to listen.

"I will tell you; I should like to proclaim it from the house-tops," said the other, seriously. "It is by having an occupation for all idle hours; an occupation sufficient to fix your attention, so that you can pass a rainy morning without fretting; an occupation sufficient to distract your mind in the evening—I mean the last hour or so before

going to bed—and yet leave no puzzling questions behind to disturb you. Now my occupation is to read carefully and strictly through, from one end to the other, the *Encyclopædia Britannica*—not one of the new editions, which might have modern speculation in it; but the edition of 1812, in forty half-volumes. I am quite sufficiently interested for the moment in Abergavenny, in Abruzzo, in Abyssinia, or Aquilaus; but yet not so eagerly as to interfere with my sleep; and when I have got away through to the end of the fortieth volume, I can begin again with my memory free from a single fact. But this I allow myself, I must tell you. I allow myself the use of a number of small hieroglyphics that I put in as I go on; and when I come to one of them again I say to myself, 'Why, the last time I read this I was in Mrs. Scott's inn at Boscastle, and what a storm was blowing!' or perhaps another tells me that when I read this paragraph I was at Ben Rhydding, just come back from a stroll across the moors; or perhaps at the Bell Inn at Henley, when all the confusion of the boat-races was about——"

"You seem to spend a good part of your life in hotels," suggested Fitzgerald.

"All of it—the whole of it, my young friend," was the prompt reply. "Why should I have the trouble of keeping a house? I have that done for me by those who have had most experience of it of any people in the country. Where should I have peace and quiet if I were worrying about servants and smoky chimneys? Why should I bother about cooking? If I do not like the cooking, or the bedrooms, or the direction of the wind, I go away elsewhere; I could not do that if I were tied to one house and hampered with my own servants. I agree with Shenstone. I know where to find a warm welcome. I can fit my habitation to the season of the year; at one time I am in the Isle of Wight, at another in the West Highlands. I may say that England, Scotland, and Ireland form my house; and I have a noble staff of servants—in numbers, at all events—who please me tolerably well. And you—at your time of life one does not travel for pleasure. May I be so impertinent as to ask what your business or profession may be?"

"I don't know that I have any just at the present moment," said Fitzgerald, absently. "I have been thinking of going to America."

"Ah," said his neighbour, regarding him with curiosity. "You know the saying, 'America is here or nowhere.'"

"That is from *Wilhelm Meister*," said Fitzgerald (it was a wonder to himself how glad he was to talk to this old gentleman, in however mechanical a fashion: the journey had been a lonesome one). "And I never could understand *Wilhelm Meister*. But I suppose as it is an epigram it must be clever. What I know is that here the Government won't give you one hundred and sixty acres of freehold land for five shillings an acre."

"You mean to farm, then? Pardon me, but—but I should not have thought that would be congenial occupation. You spoke of Wilhelm Meister," said the old gentleman, in his precise and courteous way. "What do you think of Werther, then? He was a great favourite among the young people when I was a youth."

"I like him still less," was Fitzgerald's frank reply (though his eyes sometimes wandered away, as though he were looking at other and distant things). "I don't like hothouse sentiment. I don't think a man could go on loving a woman whose eyes were quite cold and indifferent towards him—concerned about bread and butter, in fact. If she had once loved him, even before her marriage, that would have been different. I can understand a man going on through his life constant to his love for a woman who has once loved him, and whom he has lost. I mean," he added hastily, "by death. I mean one who has been taken away from him by death; and whose memory is a life-long treasure. I don't pity him; I think he is lucky."

"What?" said the old gentleman, "lucky to have lost his sweetheart."

"Yes, before he found her out," said Fitzgerald, quite simply—and even absently. "Then nothing can upset his idol. She is always beautiful to him, and true; he can have no suspicion of her; and when she has been always good and true and believable, he thinks other women may be. That is something. That is, when she dies in time

—before she has degraded herself—before she has shown him what lies women's eyes can tell——"

"I say, my young friend, that is a very extraordinary theory for one of your age to hold," said his neighbour, staring at him.

The blood rushed to Fitzgerald's forehead; he had been talking almost to himself.

"Oh," said he, hastily, "there is something in what you say, about America. Of course one would want a certain amount of capital. But the land along the Platte valley is excellent; and I fancy that these pre-emption grants are free from taxation——"

"But have you any practical experience in farming, may I ask?" said his neighbour.

Now Fitzgerald was so glad to get away from that other topic on which he had haplessly stumbled that he began and gave this old gentleman a very fair notion of the state of his affairs—of his struggles to obtain a place in the London literary world, and so forth. He named no names, except the names of newspapers.

"It is to me a very interesting story, for a reason I will tell you presently," said his companion. "May I ask if you chanced to meet Mr. Noel?"

Mr. Noel was the editor of a great daily newspaper in London, and his name was pretty well known.

"No, I never did," said Fitzgerald.

"Perhaps you did not apply to him?"

"No—I had no means of introducing myself—even if I had thought——"

"Ah! Well, you see, it happens that I am one of the proprietors of the *Daily Mirror*, and I should be delighted to give you a note of introduction to Mr. Noel."

Of course Fitzgerald expressed his gratitude for this friendly offer; but rather avoided accepting it. He had learned one or two of the lessons of life. His imagination was not so sanguine now. The time was over when a chance conversation in an Irish inn could suddenly reveal to him a roseate path to fame and fortune. And besides, what would be the use of an introduction? Supposing he were to be allowed to write for that great newspaper, what

then? For whom? Towards what end? Who was to care? He had what money he wanted; the struggle was over; he had no ambition to make his voice heard amid the discordant roar of London—even if it could reach all the way from the solitudes of Boat of Garry.

Nevertheless he felt very grateful to this old gentleman for the distraction his conversation had afforded during dinner; for it was with a renewed and agitated fear that he passed quickly by the small table in the hall where the visitors' book lay. For one brief second he paused, half determined to brave the discovery, and free his mind from this lurking and intolerable dread; and then again he turned, mastering his vacillation, and resolved to give way to no such weakness. Of what concern was it to him? Let the dead past bury its dead. He had put that black cloud behind him. His business was the present. And here, on this lovely summer evening, amid the quiet beauties of Glengariff, was there not enough to occupy his attention? He would do as these others were doing; only he rather wanted to get away from them, and be alone.

He got a boat; told the boatman he might go where he pleased; and was glad to be away from the shore, and in silence. Was it because the silence was so intense that now and again some air of an old familiar song seemed to come floating across the abyss of time, speaking of other nights and other scenes that his heart remembered? This was not Inisheen; this was Glengariff. Look at the beautiful still bay; at the wooded islands; at the solemn hills. Far up in the north-western heavens there is still a yellow glow of twilight; here along the shore everything is pale and cold and clear. In under the islands the water is of a glassy blackness; but the ripples catch the glow from the sky; and the black is barred with sharp lines of gold. A heavy splash out there tells that a salmon has leapt; the young herons high up in the trees croak as they are getting their evening meal; in by the rocks, under the bushes, the gray wet back of an otter comes up again and again silently to the surface until he finally disappears. Then they turn seaward (a white ghost of a heron rises from a creek and shows itself for a second or two crossing the shadows) and

make away down by a Martello tower; the night deepening in silence; a faint gray mist gathering along the lower hills; the twilight still strong enough to show, far away, the large mainsail of a yacht lying at her moorings—a phantom thing on the dark expanse of sea. And then slowly home again, over the clear shallows; and as one nears the landing-place, a slight stirring of wind brings a scent of roses—from the hedge there. It is a gracious evening. The stars come out one by one; the silver sickle of the moon has arisen in the south; there is just enough of ripple along the shores to make a soft and continuous murmur. And the roses make sweet the night air.

But what was this that went through his heart like fire? He was standing by the rose-hedge alone—for nearly all the people had gone indoors—dreamily listening to the low murmur of the water. But this other sound? There were two people coming along the road, and but vaguely seen in the gathering darkness; and they were quietly singing together one of Mendelssohn's duets. Did he not know it?—the pain, and the sweetness, and the longing of it! And then, somehow, a bewilderment seized him: surely if he were to hasten away at this moment—if he were to hasten away to Cork and ascend the hill and enter the small house there, he would find that all this black nightmare had only been a ghastly dream. It could not be that Kitty was a traitor—that she had gone away from him—Kitty whose eyes had looked into his, who had pledged her life and her love to him in the glen at Inisheen, who had trembled in his arms, and sobbed, and kissed him, as she bade him good-bye at the shore. He would escape from this frightful thing; he would go to Kitty herself. And the next second a sudden, strange transformation takes place; he is in a vision; Glengariff has disappeared; he is at Cork; this is Audley Place! Look—he opens the small iron gate, and goes up the pathway, and rings the bell. The sound of the piano within ceases; it is Kitty's footstep that is in the lobby. "Well, sir, have you come for your singing lesson?" "I have come for a great many lessons, Kitty." They go hand-in-hand into the warm little room; Miss Patience is absent; the piano is open. "Which

one?" says Kitty. "'O wert thou in the cauld blast?' No; you can manage that pretty well. Some day, when literature gives out, we may have to sing that together in a concert-room; and then you'll see whether anybody else can give you a lead with the accompaniment as well as I can. No; we'll try 'Oh would that my love were whispered.' Now let my hair alone; and attend to your business; and please don't bawl as if you were at Limerick races; but sing as if you were singing to me—at night—and just us two in the whole world——"

[Surely, if these two people—no doubt young people fond enough of each other—who were at this moment coming along the road to the Glengariff Hotel, could have known what agony they were inflicting on one who wished not to listen but who could not refuse to listen, surely they would have ceased their careless humming of the old familiar air.]

He is standing by Kitty's side. She strikes the first notes of the music; and he loses his voice in hers, so anxious is he to hear her:

"Oh would that my love were whispered
To thee in a single sigh;
Or murmuring in sweetest music,
On swift zephyr's wing could fly—
On zephyr's wing——"

The music stops.

"Dear me," she says, "what are you doing? What business have you with that? Don't you see that's mine? I believe you are singing by ear; and not looking at the words at all——"

"They are not worth much when you do look at them, are they, Kitty?" he says.

"That is not my business, nor yours," she answers, with the asperity of a music-mistress. "We have got to sing the duet; you can criticise the poetry afterwards. Now, you come in at the proper place—and leave my hair alone, will you? Miss Patience asked me if I had combed it with a furze-bush the other night. Now——"

And so they finish that verse, and get through the next very fairly. But presently, when they come to—

"And even in the depths of thy slumber,
When night spreads her shadowy beams——"

Kitty finds herself singing alone. She ceases, and turns round and lifts up her soft pretty black eyes in astonishment and affected anger.

"Well? What is it now? Why have you stopped?"

"It is so much nicer to hear you singing alone, Kitty; I don't want to spoil it."

"Am I to sing a duet by myself?"

"I don't care what it is, so long as you sing it."

"I thought you might have had enough of my singing by this time."

"Perhaps you will be thinking that I have had enough of you?"

"That's what you will be saying some day, at all events," she answers saucily. "And soon enough. Oh, I know what men are. Sighing their lives out over a little bit of your hair; and then you marry them, and before you know where you are they wouldn't walk the length of a draper's shop to buy a pair of gloves for you."

"But you have not been married so very many times, Kitty?"

"Don't be absurd. I speak from observation. And I know you'll be just like the rest. But never mind; it's very nice in the meantime; and you're looking such a bonny boy to-night; and—and, in fact, I'm going to be very kind to you, as I always am, and make you miserable, and if you will have the goodness to fetch me that book over there, I will sing you something so very heartrending."

He places his hand on her shoulder.

"And do you really think, Kitty, that we may grow indifferent to each other?"

"Don't tease; but bring the book."

"I want you to look at me and say so. I know what you mean when I see your eyes."

She keeps down her head.

"For I have heard strange things since I went to London; but about women only. I have heard it said that a woman's eyes are always wandering; that if you look down a *table d'hôte* you will soon find that out; that it is

not safe to leave a woman by herself who has a loving heart; that she is likely, in your absence, to become gently interested in somebody else——"

She removes his hand from her shoulder, with a quick gesture.

"It isn't true, Kitty?" he says, with gentleness.

"I know the man you mean—and I hate him!" she answers fiercely.

"It isn't true, then, that women are like that?"

And then—ah! the thought of it!—she leaps to her feet, and seizes his arms, and there is a proud indignation in the white, upturned, quivering face; and there is something like tears in the black, soft eyes, and the pretty lips are tremulous.

"Read my eyes, read my heart and my soul; and say if you can think such a thing of me!"

And then—

But this dream of what was bygone was like madness to the brain; he could no longer think of it; and happily these two people had passed into the house, and he was once more alone with the silence of the night.

Even here he could find no rest; the darkness was too full of pictures. He passed into the warm light of the hotel; and in the hall met the old gentleman who had talked with him at dinner and who was now chatting with the landlady.

"Ah, here you are, I see; I have been wondering where you had got to. Here is the letter to Mr. Noel."

"Oh, I am very much obliged to you."

"You will find him a most excellent fellow; and it is not often I try his good-nature in this way."

"I think you are doing too much for a stranger," said Fitzgerald, frankly. "I know something of newspaper-offices. I know editors are not fond of letters of introduction. Supposing that I were to begin and pester the life out of this poor man?"

"Oh, I am not afraid," said the old gentleman, good-naturedly. "Something in your conversation at dinner showed me you had an old head on young shoulders. You will see," he added, speaking in a lower voice, and, in fact,

in a somewhat mysterious manner, "that I have written to Mr. Noel merely as a friend. There are a number of proprietors, you understand, and as our interests might be diverse, we have agreed never to intermeddle with the conduct of the paper, except on such large points as the board may be summoned to consider."

"I hope," said Fitzgerald, pleasantly, "that the declaration of dividends is one of those large points."

"Marvellous!" said the other, putting a finger on his companion's arm to emphasise his tragic whisper. "Marvellous. Not a word to a human soul; but last half-year the manager announced to us a dividend of forty-three per cent on the original capital! Think of that! Now, of course, we don't want to intermeddle with a concern that is paying like that; and this note does not recommend you as a writer to Mr. Noel, but merely tells him that I had the pleasure of meeting you at the *table d'hôte* here, that you knew something of literary affairs, and asking to be allowed to introduce you. That is all. You understand?"

"Oh, perfectly. I am very much obliged to you."

"Although I am a pretty withered old stick myself," said the old gentleman, facetiously, "I believe in the infusion of new blood—so does our manager,—a most shrewd and excellent man. 'New blood,' I say to him: 'When you can get it,' says he. Now I am off to my final hour at the *Encyclopædia*. Where was I? Oh yes, at *London*: the account of the great fire, very interesting, I assure you. But," he added, with impressiveness, "*not too interesting*. I shall not sleep any the less soundly to-night because I have been reading about the baker's shop in Pudding Lane."

"Good-night to you, then," said Fitzgerald.

"But not yet, if you are coming into the drawing-room. Of course you are; there are some charming young ladies there. I have my volume there, too; their chatting or singing does not interrupt me; on the contrary, is it not a pleasant variety to look up from Ancient Thebes or the wars of Alexander and see a nicely-rounded cheek and pretty eyelids bent over a book? I always keep my volume

there, though once or twice the wicked young creatures have hidden it out of mischief."

So he went off and into the warm, bright little drawing-room; and Fitzgerald was left in the hall. He had a reason for lingering—which he dared scarcely confess to himself.

"You have a good many people here," he said, cheerfully, to the landlady or manageress, "for this time of the year."

"Oh yes, sir. It is rather a favourite time. Many people like to go through and see Killarney while some of the hawthorn is still out."

He was turning over the visitors' book, his face and manner careless, his heart throbbing with a nameless dread.

"Is Boat of Garry a pretty place?" he asked.

"Oh yes, sir; I believe so, sir; I have never been there myself."

He did not hear that answer. He had come to three names, two of them bracketed together; all written in the same hand—

Miss Romayne . . . }	Cork.
Miss Patience . . . }	
E. L. Cobbs . . .	Liverpool.

He shut the book quickly, without looking round; he dared not show the landlady his ghastly face. He took refuge in the drawing-room, concealing himself in a corner, with his hands clenched on the newspaper he held up before him: the letters he saw before him seemed to be printed in blood. And then there was a kind of suffocation in the air of the place; was not the night hot? Some people were laughing; it was a strange sound. A chord was struck on the piano; and there was silence. Two voices were heard—two girls' voices—one soprano, the other contralto—and what must they sing but "O wert thou in the cauld blast"? His clenched hands were trembling; the agony was too great. But he managed to read on—such reading!—such blind, wild fixing the eyes on words that had no meaning—until the musical piece was finished; and then he slunk out, his face averted, from

the room, and found safety, and coolness, and time to think, in his small apartment upstairs.

But even here, as he sat down, strange fancies that he strove to banish came into his head. Why did he look so intently at the window-sill, at the dressing-table, at the mirror? The mirror can reflect many faces; but no trace remains. This bedroom must have been breathed in by many a visitor; but here was the sweet fresh air of the night blowing in at the open window. What idle fancies were these? The room was but as another room. He got a book, held it up against the light, and began to read.

He read nothing. The window was still open; the soft night-air blowing in; and yet the room seemed to choke him. And then all at once he seemed to know that Kitty had occupied this room. She had kissed her lover out there in the passage; she had come in here to be alone with her perjured heart; she had looked in the mirror to see whether her eyes had been lying as bewitchingly as was their wont. These were the eyes with which she had sought him out when, breathless and smiling, she had come down to the Cork station to see him away—glad, no doubt, that he was going, and knowing that he would trouble her no more. She had taken back her love, her pledged love, from him; but she could give him a basket; and salad cut with her own hands! Was she not kind? Was she not generous? Had she not a woman's thoughtfulness and pretty consideration and affectionate ways? He could see her smiling, and kissing her hand to him, and waving her handkerchief, as the train slowly left the station; she was thankful, no doubt, she had escaped; she had got through the hypocrisy; her eyes had met his, but he had not read down deep enough, nor seen the treachery of her heart.

The air of this room seemed contaminated; he could not remain in it. Was it on that window-sill there that she had leaned her arms, on the still morning, and looked out? Oh, her eyes were pretty enough: any one passing along the road and noticing her would say that was a charming enough face. Any kisses to sell this morning, fair

young lady?—it seems these things are bought nowadays. Is the price high? Must one hail from Manchester, or Liverpool, or some such commercial place, before one can become a purchaser? Hearts, too: do they find quick buyers, seeing they are so easily transferable? Bah!—she is no woman fit for a man's love—throw her out to the dogs, the smirking Jezebel!

He puts down his book; he has not been reading much.

Why this contempt, then? Why this scorn of poor Kitty, who (when she was at Inisheen, at least) did her best to be loving? Poor little Kitty; the small, trembling, over-fond heart mistook its strength. No doubt she wished to be steadfast and true. Perhaps she tried for a time. But she was a creature of the sunshine; the warm little heart went dancing and fluttering on; what was it to her that behind her lay a man's broken life?

No, he could not remain in this room; the objects in it were horrible; the air stifled him. He went downstairs again; got hold of somebody to whom he made the excuse of sleeplessness; and so had the door opened, and went out wandering into the darkness.

And now a breeze had sprung up in the south; and all the night was awake. The wind murmured and trembled through the dark branches of the trees; there was a sound along the shore; and the sad mother earth was listening to the wail of her daughter the sea. Only far away in the stars—those calm, and shining, and benignant orbs—did there seem to be peace; if only one could reach them through the gateway of the grave.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ALONE.

NEXT morning the little old gentleman with the dried-up face and the brown wig was standing in the verandah outside the hotel when the Boat of Garry carriage—a large open landau, with a pair of smart-looking grays—drove up to the door, and Fitzgerald came out. Master Willie, who had been taught by John Ross to observe the expressions of the human face as closely as the colours of palings and of Chelsea cabbage-gardens, instantly perceived that his friend and patron of the preceding evening was surprised—more than that, that he seemed to have some misgiving.

"This isn't newspaper work I am engaged on at present," said the younger man, promptly, as his luggage was being handed up to the coachman on the box. "I am going as a sort of land-agent or surveyor, to see whether a house and a shooting down here are all right, before they are offered to a tenant."

"Oh, I see," the old gentleman remarked, as he scanned the turn-out. "He won't find fault with the carriage, at all events. A landau is the proper sort of carriage for this changeable sort of climate; but heavy, eh, on the hilly roads? They seem a strong pair of beasts, though."

"Good-bye," said Fitzgerald, as he shook hands with him. "If ever I have the courage to try the newspapers again, I may make use of the note of introduction you were kind enough to give me."

"It will be an easier experiment than going out to Ne-

braska for your 160 acres of land, eh? Don't you think so?"

Then Fitzgerald got into the landau; and when the near horse (whose name he afterwards discovered to be Wellington) had reared and pranced on the ground for a bit, off went both of them like a bolt from a bow, apparently well accustomed to the weight of this spacious carriage. The morning was fine, though there was a strange luminous opacity in the air—a sort of thin sea-fog suffused with sunlight—that hung over the woods and hills like a tender bridal veil. The air was soft to the cheeks; the warm wind was from the south. If this were to be banishment, it was banishment to a very beautiful and gracious part of the world.

And indeed, as Fitzgerald lay back in the soft, blue-cushioned carriage, he had an uneasy sense that the whole performance was very much like setting a beggar on horseback. He regarded the two white buttons on the brown coat of the coachman; and wondered whether he could not induce the human being within that garment to be a little more companionable, and less elaborately respectful. So he hit on the device of adding a trifle to his Irish accent; and he perceived that, by slow degrees, the coachman, who was a good-looking man of about thirty, permitted a more friendly look to come into his eyes when answering questions. At last Fitzgerald said to him—

"What is your name, now?"

"Murtough Dunne, sorr."

"But what do they generally call you?"

"Murtough, sorr."

"Very well, then, Murtough; you stop the horses for a minute, and I'll get out and come up on the box; for I want you to tell me about the country."

"As ye plase, sorr."

So Fitzgerald got up on the box; but he knew better than to begin on the subject of topography. He praised the look of the grays. Wellington, he discovered, was the showier of the two, and always made a little fuss about starting; but Dan was the one for real hard work. Dan had taken the dog-cart sixty miles in one day—over bad

country—and was as fresh as paint after it. Dan was his honour's favourite. But indeed—as appeared from hints continually cropping up in this desultory talk about horses, and carriages, and hay, and shooting-parties, and what not—his honour, that is to say, the late owner of the place, seemed to have had a great many favourites, both among the human beings and the animals around him, and to have left behind him a reputation for constant kindness and consideration. He was quick-tempered, it appeared; but his wrath was over with a word; and there was nothing the people round about would not do to serve him and to please him.

"That made it easy for the keeper, then?" said Fitzgerald. "No trampling of nests in the spring—no chasing of leverets by the dogs?"

"True for you, sorr," said the coachman. "There was John O'Leary, up at the Knockgarvan farm, and he had a dog—sure, sorr, there never was such a rascal for hunting, and worrying, and shtaling—both bird and baste. What does he do but bring down the dog, wid a string round his neck, and ties him up in the yard, and laves word for his honour to shoot him or drown him as he plased. 'Bedad,' says Micky——"

"But who is Micky?"

"Sure the keeper, sorr! 'Bedad,' says he, 'his honour will do neither the one nor the other whin he comes home; and wid your lave I'll get rid of the baste mysilf.'"

"And I suppose the gentleman up at Knockgarvan expected a little compensation?" Fitzgerald said, suspiciously.

Murtough grinned, and said nothing.

"How much was it?"

"I tink it was tree pounds, sorr, his honour gave him; and the cur not worth the sound of a sixpence!"

In this way Fitzgerald managed to obtain a large amount of information about Boat of Garry and its neighbourhood; and the long drive—through occasional woods, or along high and stony hill-roads (with always the far Atlantic in the south)—was rendered cheerful enough. He made it a matter of business to obtain these particulars. He had undertaken a commission, as it were. And he tried hard to devote his whole time and thinking to this duty; so that

amongst enquiries about the price of oats, and the probable introduction of hay-drying machines, and the different kinds of nails for horseshoes, and so forth, other and less immediate things might be definitely shut out and forgotten. Was not this a new and strange experience for him—to be installed as master of a house that he had never seen? How would he get on with the other people about? This man seemed civil and honest, and was now rather more friendly, while always preserving a careful respect. And he could report that he, at least, had not been neglectful of his duties: the horses seemed in excellent condition; the metal of the harness was brilliantly polished; the carriage throughout was as spick and span as it could be—much more so than is at all common with carriages in remote parts of the country where they get rough and constant usage.

By-and-by, however, the sunlight seemed to withdraw itself from the thin mist; it grew darker a little; then the moisture in the air was felt in points; at last a fine rain began to fall.

"Will your honour be for going inside now?" Murtough asked.

"Oh no," was the answer. "But I will hold the reins while you close the carriage. I know the south of Ireland. Besides, I have a waterproof."

And very soon he had to put on that waterproof; for the soft small rain now fell steadily; and the outlines of the hills and the reaches of the lake were blurred over or altogether invisible; and the skies were growing dark. Murtough had a waterproof also; but he did not seem to think this rain sufficient to injure his livery. So the pair of grays trotted on monotonously, or splashed through puddles; and the rain fell more slightly or more closely as the clouds came drifting over from the hills; and all the time Fitzgerald was interesting himself in particulars about the Boat of Garry household or asking the name of this or that feature in the ever-changing and widening and dripping landscape.

At length there was a sharp dip down from the high road, and they passed through an avenue of trees. Here the landau dragged heavily through the mud; and there

was a pattering of big rain-drops from the branches. Then they swung into the open again; passed through an open iron gate; drove briskly along a pathway of wet gravel; and drew up at the door of the house of which Fitzgerald was to be the temporary master.

It was a plain, square, two-storied building, with an unpretentious porch of wood and glass. The shrubbery around the bit of lawn looked trim and well cared for; there was no sign of neglect about the place. And when, leaving his dripping waterproof in the porch, he walked into the hall, and then into the dining-room (where there was a fire, despite the fact that the weather had been unusually warm, even for the first week in June) everything around seemed neat and clean and well looked after. There was not the slightest air of neglect about the place; on the contrary, one would have expected a trim house-mistress to make her appearance to welcome the visitor. There were preparations for luncheon on the table. There was a pair of slippers on the fender. Beside the easy-chair at the corner of the fireplace stood a smaller table, on which some books and old magazines were methodically arranged.

"I beg your pardon, sir," some one said at the door.

The voice sent the blood to his heart—it was so like another voice that he now regarded as being beyond the grave. He turned quickly. But this person was merely a quiet-looking, rather pretty young woman of about six or eight and twenty, whose black hair and blue eyes made him conclude she was Irish. But then he recollected. Was not this the English maid whose fellow-servants, according to Mrs. Chetwynd, had considered to have made such a frightful *mésalliance* in marrying the good-natured Irish coachman?

"I beg your pardon, sir," said she, in very pretty English. "I was having your things taken upstairs. Would you please to have luncheon now?"

"Oh yes," he said, "any time. I am in no hurry."

"I hope you will find everything to your satisfaction sir——"

"Oh, I am sure of that. I am not particular."

"If you would be so kind as to tell me anything you

would like different, we could get it. We have had two letters from Mrs. Chetwynd, sir; and Mr. M'Gee has been here several times. I hope you will be comfortable, sir."

"Oh, no doubt, no doubt. You are Mrs.—Mrs. Dunne, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir. My husband said this morning he thought it would rain; and so I had the fire lit, sir, in case you might have some things damp."

"Oh, thank you, but I don't think there will be any need to keep up the fire in this warm weather."

"Thank you, sir," said she, and withdrew.

He went to the window. It was a pretty place, despite the wet. It was so quiet and still that you could not well tell whether the continuous "*sh—sh—sh*" outside was the falling of rain or the murmur of the brooklet that splashed along unseen, behind the bushes at the foot of the lawn. The rain, too, had made everything look even more richly green than it normally is at this time of the year—from the luxuriant rhododendrons, whose glossy star-like leaves were all shining wet, to the belt of trees, maple and chestnut and ash, that made a circle round the place. But through these trees there were spacious openings; and through some you looked in one direction over broad meadows and one or two patches of wood, while in another direction a broad pale silver streak between the foliage showed where the shallow waters of a creek came up from Bantry Bay. And always, in this loneliness, was the murmur of the rain, rising a little as the wind stirred in the branches, and then again subsiding into a sort of semi-silence, in which one could hear the sharp twittering of birds or the lowing of kine at some distant farm.

Again there was a knock at the door; and he started. He wished this woman's voice had not that peculiar tone in it. He wished she had the croak of a raven. Was it not enough that this soft veil of rain was but as a screen that seemed to hide behind it the fancies and visions and pictures of other days? That is the saddest thing about rain; it makes the landscape look far away; it invites the imagination; the world looks vague—just as the ghost of a woman's face may look, if you think of it through tears.

"Come in," said he, sharply.

It was Mrs. Dunne; and there was an older woman visible—bringing some things to a table in the hall. He turned to the window again.

Presently that pretty, startling voice said—

"Luncheon is served, sir."

"Thank you," said he, thinking she would go.

She remained, however, standing behind the empty chair. He went and took his seat.

"I beg your pardon, sir," she said, "but will you have champagne or claret? I have not opened the bottle yet. Mr. Frank had sometimes the one and sometimes the other."

At this Fitzgerald flushed like a schoolboy. How could he explain to her that he was not Mr. Frank; that he was much more of a fellow-servant with herself? It was clear that these instructions from Mrs. Chetwynd and from Mr. M'Gee were putting him into an altogether false position.

"But I am not at all used to such luxury, Mrs. Dunne," said he, good-naturedly. "Is there any beer in the house?"

"Oh yes, sir, I will fetch some. And they call me Kate, sir."

When she returned with the ale and put it on the table, he said (without looking up)—

"Thank you, Mrs.—Mrs. Dunne—that is if you don't mind—if it is the same to you—to have that name, from a stranger, you know. And I would not trouble you to wait. I am sure there is everything here. If I want anything I will ring."

"Thank you, sir," said she, with the same pretty politeness; and then she stirred the fire and left the room.

As he sat, moodily and dreamily, at this far too copious banquet, it seemed to him—or perhaps it was only a bit of sarcastic phantasy that he played with—that women were by nature really kind and thoughtful and considerate, so long as you had nothing to do with their affections, when they were as the tigers that slay. Think of Mrs. Chetwynd's solicitude about his welfare; her repeated injunctions; the proofs being visible on the table here at this ordinary mid-day meal. He, as well as any, and better than most, knew with what trouble and even difficulty many of these things

must have been procured at a remote country-house in the south of Ireland. Think of the anxious kindness of this poor creature who would have him consider himself quite as much at home as Mr. Frank. Kitty, even when her heart had gone away from him, when her eyes were smiling only to deceive him and get rid of him, she must needs rob herself of half her night's rest for the purposes of cooking, and come rushing and panting to the station with the salad that her own hands had dressed. That was the mission of woman, then? There they found themselves at home; were natural and trustworthy? There they were truest to themselves? It was an odd theory—but he left the food before him almost untouched; and went to the easy-chair and lit a pipe; but soon dropped that on the floor and went fast asleep, for he had not closed his eyes the whole of the previous night.

He was awakened by Kitty's voice (as he thought in his dreams), and he sprang to his feet with his face white.

"Oh, I beg your pardon, sir," said the English maid-servant, about to withdraw.

"No, no; what is it, Mrs. Dunne? Do you want to take away the things?"

"It is only Micky the keeper, sir, who would like to see you, sir. But any time will be convenient——"

"Where is he?"

"In the kitchen, sir."

"Tell him to come along now, and we will go and have a look at the kennel."

"Very well, sir."

Micky, or Mick, as he was generally called, proved to be a smart-looking, clean-built young fellow of about two-and-twenty, with reddish-yellow hair, ruddy-brown eyes, and a face that could express more than his tongue. For he had come from one of the westernmost districts in Kerry; and his English was somewhat scant. Fitzgerald, on the other hand, had almost forgotten what little Irish he ever knew; so that the conversation that now ensued in the hall, about cartridges and the cleaning of guns, and what not, was conducted with a good deal of guessing on both sides. However, Mick showed himself shrewd enough; he quite

understood Fitzgerald's monitions about the importance of keeping on good terms with the farmers and shepherds around; and when, in the little gun-room, they turned over the various drawers and cases and so forth—sad enough relics these were of the dead man—it was very clear that he had done his best to master his trade. The guns had been beautifully cleaned and carefully oiled and put away. Such cartridges as were there were well made. Not only that, but some sea-birds stuck up along the wall were of Mick's own stuffing; and they were very fairly done, considering the difficulty of the performance. Master Willie had found a companion just to his mind.

"The loicense, sir?" said Mick, as if his clear brown eyes conveyed all the rest of the question.

"Yes, what?"

"'Twas Misther M'Gee was axing would it be a gun-loicense or a kaper's loicense he was to be getting for me."

"What had you before?"

"Sure I had the kaper's loicense; but Misther M'Gee was saying mebbe you'd be shooting all the toime yourself, sir, and what would I be after wanting the game-loicense for?"

"What did you use it for before?"

But this took Mick some time to explain; the fact being that "his honour," as every one except the English maid-servant called young Mr. Chetwynd, had been away frequently during the shooting season, and on that account the keeper had had a license to kill game, so that an occasional hamper could be sent to London. Fitzgerald said he would have to settle that matter afterwards; and together they set out for the kennel—through the silent thin wet that seemed to hang in the atmosphere like a vapour.

He spent about an hour in the kennel and stable; and then returned to the solitary room, got a book, and sat down to read in the melancholy silence of the rain. But he was restless. The type before him got into a fashion of fading away; and pictures formed themselves in its stead. This would not do.

He threw down the book; and went out and put on his

shooting-boots and leggings and waterproof. Then he got out the fishing-rod he had brought with him; and jointed it together on the lawn. Then he got his fly-book; and chose indifferently the first cast that came to hand, which he twisted round his hat. Thus equipped he set forth through the shrubbery, and made his way to the side of the small but rapid stream that came down from the hills through the valley to the salt water of the bay.

He had not stayed to ask what chances of sport there were. But the throwing of a fly would be sufficient occupation, he thought; one could not stay indoors the whole afternoon; besides, there would be practice—in case he might happen on some better fishing elsewhere.

So he made his way through the rank, tall grass and herbage (the best shooting-boots in the world could not keep out the wet) until he reached the side of the stream; and there he put on the cast; and with a short line threw the flies on the swirling water. It very soon appeared that if he only wanted to exercise his skill he would have ample opportunities; for the streamlet was narrow; long weeds grew down to the very edge; the water was rapid; and in the first three casts he got twice caught up. But when he had chosen his position better, and was a little more careful, he soon found himself catching fish—that is to say, small brown trout of about four to the pound. It amused him, and did no harm to them; nay, perhaps it was a benefit to them, for when they were flung in again they had learned a lesson in life, and would be more cautious in the future. And to him there was a certain variety in the occupation besides merely trying to dodge the tall weeds. To get at some of the pools and reaches of this sharply curving river he had to cross necks of land that were obviously covered at very high tides with the sea water; and as these contained a considerable number of deep, peaty-looking holes partially concealed by the long grass, there was a possibility of his finding himself any moment up to the neck in mud. So he kept on—on this sad, dull day, with the soft rain continuously falling; discovering new pools; hanging up on weeds; landing small fish, and leisurely throwing them back again, until——

Yes, until there was a sound that made his heart jump —the shrill whirr-r-r-r of the reel! Up went the top of the rod, out went the butt, in a moment! Then he saw his opportunity—he floundered down through the bushes, and got into one of the shallow reaches of the river, where the water was not up to his knees; here he could deal with his enemy face to face. The fish had at first banged away down stream, but was now sulking under a bank; so he cautiously waded and waded, winding in his line the while, and keeping as heavy a strain on as he dared. If this was a grilse or sea-trout making its first experiment into fresh water, he knew very well that it was as likely as not to resent this treatment and make a bolt back for the sea. And now there came between him and his prey a bend of the river where the banks came close together; and he was afraid it was too deep for him to wade. The fearful uncertainty of that moment! Look at the danger of getting on either bank—scrambling up among the tall weeds—if the fish should just choose that precious point of time——

Suddenly there was a slackening of the line, and for a wild second he saw a blue-and-white thing flashing in the air and splashing down again on the water. He dipped his rod. Quickly and sharply raising it, he felt no harm had been done. But now the line was appreciably slackening again, and as he rapidly wound it in, he found that the fish was heading up-stream, and must be approaching him. This was a serious situation. At last the rod was nearly vertical, though he was winding as hard as he could to get the strain on again; and he was anxiously looking at the point. Just at the instant of his greatest endeavour he joyfully felt the strain returning—nay, he had to release his grip of the handle of the reel—he merely kept his fore-finger on the line, ready for any emergency—and then with another great whirr-r-r-r away went the fish again, round a turn in the bank; and the next thing he knew was that his rod was quite limp and vertical in his hand, with the line, minus the cast, flying high and idly in the air.

So far from disheartening him, however, this put a new

aspect on affairs altogether; and he thought that the best thing he could do, before risking any further and similar losses, was to go straight away home, and sit down, and thoroughly overhaul his fly-book, and see that his casting-lines were in good condition. This, when he had changed his wet clothes, he proceeded to do; and the table in the dining-room was pretty well covered with fishing material when the English maid-servant entered.

"When would you like to have dinner, sir?" said the young woman.

"I do not care. It appears to me I have dined already, Mrs. Dunne."

"Mr. Frank used to dine at seven, sir."

"Very well, seven, if you like. But please don't take so much trouble as about luncheon; I am used to very simple fare."

"I am sorry we can't get any game at this time of the year, sir."

"Well, I know that."

She lingered and hesitated for a second or two.

"I wish, sir—I beg your pardon, sir—but would you be so kind as to speak to Micky?"

"What is it now?" said he, looking up for the first time—for he had been busy with his flies.

"The Fenians, sir. Some of them have been down here, and they are frightening the poor boy. He does not want to join them; but they have been threatening him—yes, and threatening the house, sir, if he does not join them——"

"Send him to me, Mrs. Dunne. I know the fellows."

Presently Mick appeared at the door of the dining-room, anxious-eyed.

"Are there any Fenians about here, Micky?" said he, pulling at a casting-line. Kate Dunne was listening the while, though she pretended she was getting out the dinner things from the sideboard.

"N—no, sir."

"I'm glad of that," said Fitzgerald. "I come from the Blackwater; and we know how to deal with them there. If any of the idle blackguards—I say if any of the

idle bligards," he repeated, looking up, and speaking with more significance, "should come bothering about here, and trying to get decent young fellows into trouble—getting them to drink whisky and march about at night—you come and tell me. While I am here I won't have any strangers come prowling about—do you understand, Micky? Wasn't it you made up the No. 4 cartridges?"

"Sure it was, your honour!"

"Well, now, it's one or two of the No. 4 cartridges that I keep in my pocket at this time of the year, just for anything that may turn up; and I generally have a gun handy—especially at night. Now d'ye see now, if I catch any idle vagabond interfering about the place, and threatening anybody, or talking about his marching and his countermarching; I'm not going to wait to ask him his business; it's the Queen's guinea to a quid o' tobacco he'll get a charge of No. 4 shot catching him up behind; and ye weighed the shot yoursilf, Micky; and sure ye know it'll make the bligards jump?"

Micky went away deeply impressed. That Irish way of talking carried conviction with it. He sought out his friend Murtough the coachman; and, after a second or two of thoughtful silence, he said—

"Sure 'tis the new master can spake his moind. Blood and ounds, but I hope there'll be no murther about the house."

In the evening Fitzgerald dined in solitary state; the pretty housemaid, very quickly perceiving that he preferred to be alone, leaving things about handy, so that he could help himself. Thereafter he smoked and read. Towards nine or so she again appeared, bringing in the spirit-tray.

"Thank you," said he, looking up in a bewildered kind of way (for he had been vaguely dreaming as well as reading), "I don't want anything more."

"If you would rather have brandy, sir," said she, "I think there is some."

"Thank you, but I never take spirits."

"Oh, indeed, sir. I hope you will find your room comfortable, sir. You will find a candle on the hall-table."

"Thank you very much."

"Good-night, sir."

"Good-night to you."

So thus had passed the first day in this new neighbourhood; and it had not been uninteresting. He was not thinking of any work now; he had no thought of turning these fresh experiences into literature. Nor had he any reflection that this place, so remote, and still, and silent, and beautiful, was just the place where Nature, if she were communed with in her mysterious haunts, might reveal her subtler secrets to the listening and sorrowing soul. No; he had got through a sort of day's duty; and that had kept him from thinking much—which was his chief good at present. He was glad to be able to do something in return for the Chetwynds' kindness. No doubt his being there and occupying the place would reconcile the old lady to the idea of letting it. He would be able, he hoped, to give a good report of both house and shooting. And no more than the man in the moon, it may be added, had he the slightest conception of the purpose Mrs. Chetwynd had in view in begging him to be so kind as to go and pay a visit of inspection to Boat of Garry.

CHAPTER XXV.

GLIMMERINGS.

He was soon to have an inkling of that, however. After having been some little time in this still, silent, and beautiful place, occupied mostly in taking long and solitary walks by sea and shore, he wrote as follows to Mary Chetwynd :—

"Boat of Garry.

"Dear Miss Chetwynd—In the last letter I had from Hyde Park Gardens, your aunt seemed to think it quite enough if I remained here enjoying myself in idleness; and the temptation to do that is sufficiently strong; for it is one of the most beautiful neighbourhoods I have ever seen, and the people are very friendly. I think I ought to remind you, however, that if you wish to let the house and shooting, it would be easier to do that now than later on; and really it seems a pity to think of such a place remaining vacant. I am afraid a good many of the young birds were killed by the heavy rains in the early spring; but in some cases there are second broods in the nests; and there will be plenty of hares. Every one says the winter-shooting is most excellent; though Mr. Chetwynd does not appear ever to have spent a winter here. Everything about the house, as I wrote to your aunt, seems well managed; the horses in excellent condition; the dogs not so good, as far as I can judge (the tenant should bring a brace of thoroughly-trained setters with him), and the new boiler will be in the steam-yacht next week. As to the prettiness of the place,

of course you know about that as well as I; but if I hear of any photographer coming through by way of Glengariff to Killarney, I will take the liberty of getting him to come down here and take one or two photographs. These would not cost much; and they would help you in letting the place.—Yours faithfully, WILLIAM FITZGERALD."

This was the answer:—

"Hyde Park Gardens, Sunday evening.

"DEAR MR. FITZGERALD—I am in deep disgrace. Your letter seemed to me so reasonable that I thought I would venture, in the most roundabout way, to make the suggestion. Well, auntie, as you know, is not the kind of person to get into a tempest of indignation; but I could see she was really pained at the notion of taking money for poor Frank's place; and that she regarded me as a most unfeeling and wicked creature. Of course I did not press the matter. I suppose I was premature. But what I really do believe auntie means to do with Boat of Garry is to ask you to take it—probably with the name of Chetwynd as well. Perhaps I should not mention this project to you; for I have no authority; but auntie has been talking about it to Dr. Bude (who is a great friend of yours, by the way); and if he advises yes, the least you can do will be to send him some game. Auntie appears to wish that in the meantime you should wait over for the shooting, unless you find the place intolerably dull; and we both hope you find the house and the neighbourhood to your liking; and that if you are writing any more papers like the 'Woodland Walk,' you won't forget to put something about Boat of Garry into them.

"Yours sincerely,

"MARY CHETWYND.

"*P.S.*—After all, on reflection, it seems to me that auntie may be right. I am afraid I should not like to think of poor Frank's place going away into the hands of perfect strangers. But as this is a mere piece of sentiment, I am not going to interfere in any way, or give any advice.

"M. C."

When he read this letter he was seated on a rocky knoll high up on the hillside, whither it had been brought him by a boy. Far below he could see the small house ensconced among the abundant foliage; the trim lawn; the belt of trees; the spacious meadow outside; and the curved arm of the sea—a silver white—that swept round as if to enclose the whole. Was it not a beautiful picture, then, under these skies of June?—a desirable enough possession? Here, indeed, was a Vale of Avoca, where one might pass the peaceful years away, quietly and equally, with the friends one loved best! But, strangely enough, he looked on the place with no longing eye. He did not crave for the shelter, the snugness, the indoor affections of a house. Here, alone, with the sad hills, and the clouds floating in from the Atlantic, he was more at rest. He watched the great and mysterious shadows moving along, and those hills growing darker and grander, or disappearing altogether behind the folds of vapour, and slowly revealing themselves again in altered lines; and in the face of this mighty phantasmagoria, human life, with all its fears and ills, seemed a petty and trivial thing. He watched the great sea darkening or lightening with the lowering or the lifting of the heavy skies. And sometimes, as it seemed to him, there was a sudden vision overhead; a break in the pall of white, and a glimpse into a far and unknown realm of intensest blue; and then a warmth and a golden glory spread around him on the herbage and the rocks; and the clear singing of a lark sprang into the silence, far away down there over the waterfall and the glen; and the sea air coming over from the south grew so balmy and soft that it was delicious to breathe; one turned one's throat to it; and the touch of it on the cheek was like the touch of a velvet glove.

Look, now, at this new companion of his. In the perfect stillness of sea and sky and land, and while his eyes are far away, some quick movement near at hand tells him that he is not alone. A small rabbit, the very tiniest of baby-rabbits, a ball of brown fur, has come quietly along, all unconscious of his presence, until it is within three yards of him. It trots here and there, with a leisurely

ungainly tripping, nibbling the grass now and again, never looking up. And then, suddenly it stands still; and the fat little ball of fur has great staring eyes—staring with observation, not fright; for very likely it has never beheld a human being before. The big, flat, gray eyes regard him unwinking; there is no movement. Then, with a little forward jerk of the head, up go the long ears; and again the motionless staring. Then up goes the baby-rabbit itself on its hind legs; the fore-paws comically drooping; and again the steadfast stare at this immovable strange creature seated on the rock. Then, by some accident, he inadvertently stirs a hand or a foot—the eighth of an inch will do it; and at the very same instant the earth is left empty—there is only a glimmer of white disappearing into the brackens a dozen yards away.

By-and-by he makes out another living object apparently not much bigger than the baby-rabbit, coming up the hill by the side of the narrow glen, and as he makes no doubt that this is the same boy sent up with another message, he rises, puts the letter in his pocket, and proceeds to descend. Sure enough, the shock-headed gossoon has a message; there is a gentleman waiting for his honour. What gentleman? He does not know. Did he come in a dog-cart with a white horse? That he did. And then Fitzgerald knows that Mr. M'Gee, the Bantry solicitor, has paid him another visit; and hastens down through bracken and over stone walls until he reaches the road sweeping round to the house.

This Mr. M'Gee was a big, burly, good-natured kind of man, with a sort of sporting air about him, who had really gone a good deal out of his way to make Fitzgerald's stay at Boat of Garry pleasant for him. And his present mission was to say (with profuse apologies for delay) that at last the steam yacht, the *Black Swan* as they called her, had got her new boiler in, which was to increase her speed by two miles an hour, and all she wanted now was to get in a few tons of coal and a store of oil; and would he, that is, Fitzgerald, care to take coach and rail to Cork, and make the trip in her from Cork Harbour to Bantry Bay.

"Oh no; no, thank you," said Fitzgerald, hastily.

"Sure, 'twould be as safe as sitting in chapel," said Mr. M'Gee, with a good-natured laugh. "We'll wait for smooth wather; and if there's too heavy a swell when we come to Cape Clear or the Mizen Head, can't we run back and put into Glandore?"

"It isn't that," said Fitzgerald. "I don't feel inclined to go to Cork just at present."

"I was thinking 'twould be a bit of variety for ye; for divil the much there is to do about here at this time of the year."

"The fishing is capital."

"The fishing! the fishing did ye say?"

"If you like to wait for lunch you'll have a bit of a three-pound sea-trout I caught in the stream there only yesterday afternoon."

"D'ye say that now! It's myself has tried it half-a-dozen times! and I might as well have been throwing a fly into me grandmother's taypot. But faith I'll stay to lunch wid ye, and give the ould mare a bit of a rest."

Master Willie did not say anything about the number of trout to be found in the adjacent stream; but at all events this particular one proved to be most excellent; and Mr. M'Gee proceeded to make himself very much at home.

"Katie, darling," said he to Mrs. Dunne when she brought in the beer, "isn't there a glass of whisky about the house now?"

"I beg your pardon for forgetting," said Fitzgerald, "but really I am not sure who ought to play the part of host."

"Well, many's the evening I've spent in this very room with the poor boy that's gone; and a pleasanter companion or a finer gintleman there was not in the country," said he. "Thank ye, my good gyurl; and isn't there a drop o' hot wather about now? Well, sir, ye've a good ould Irish name; and I hope ye'll have a happy stay among us; and niver fear, ye'll be mighty plazed with the *Black Swan* when we get her round, and sure ye'll be able to run up to Glengariff whenever ye want, and the divil sweep her if she doesn't do her ten moils an hour."

The quite novel excitement of meeting a stranger had

almost driven the contents of Miss Chetwynd's letter out of Fitzgerald's head; but when, after luncheon, they went out to the seat fronting the lawn, and had coffee there on the little marble-topped table, and lit their pipes, the quiet charm of the place again stole over him, and he could not help for a moment wondering what his sensations would be if he were really the owner of such a delightful spot. Of course, it was out of the question. A more preposterous white elephant could not be imagined. Where could he find money to keep up such a house—to pay wages and find provender for the horses? It was like offering a crossing-sweeper the use for the season of a three-hundred-ton yacht. Indeed he so clearly saw that this could only be regarded as a sort of pretty sentimental fancy on the part of Mrs. Chetwynd—as something so obviously outside the limits of practical possibilities—that he was very nearly mentioning it to this good-natured lawyer; but as Mr. M'Gee had for the moment dropped into a snooze, he forbore; and finally concluded he would say nothing about the matter.

The quiet was enough to send any man to sleep. The day had brightened up; there were wider deeps of blue between the ribbed-white clouds; and the mellow sunlight fell warm on the meadows and on the lawn, on the glancing trembling green of the broad-leaved limes, and on the still yellower green of the drooping foliage of a swaying acacia. The air was soft and warm, and yet moist; and it was pervaded by a scent of all growing things—a general, vague, delicious perfume that perhaps came chiefly from the lush grass there not yet cut for hay. A curlew or two were stalking along the shore, where the bold white scimitar of the sea came in between the meadows. A blackbird shot through the rhododendrons, and the silence seemed to miss its suddenly-closed song. But there was always the plash and gurgle of the stream at the foot of the lawn; and sometimes the distant bark of a dog, or the rumbling of a cart, spoke of a life far remote from this enchanted enclosure, that seemed to be given over to sunlight and peace and the growing of green leaves.

The lawyer awoke with a start.

"Begorra——" said he.

"You were saying," observed Fitzgerald, just as if he had not been asleep at all, "that she was registered up to eighty pounds on the square inch; but of course the boiler has been tested beyond that——"

"Faix, I believe I've been asleep," said Mr. M'Gee, rubbing his eyes. "'Tis no wonder, when ye get out of the worrld. What will ye be afther doing now, all the afternoon?"

"I? I am going down to the stream to see if I can't catch another sea-trout for my dinner."

"Good luck to ye, thin; and I'll go and get the mare out, for 'tis a mighty long drive to Bantry."

So that unusual feature of life at Boat of Garry, a visitor, disappeared; and Fitzgerald was left to the solitude and silence and dreamy loveliness of the place. In the afternoon, however, he caught a good sea-trout, and also a brown one of about three-quarters of a pound—a fair size for this small stream. And again he had dinner by himself; and thereafter he smoked and read as usual. By-and-by, when the moon was clear on the gravel walk, he stole outside; he had got into a way of doing that; the servants thought the new master merely wished to have a breath of fresh air, after the smoke of the dining-room, before going to bed.

And perhaps it was only that. He walked along the gravel in the clear light (though the moon was now waning); and he listened to the croak of the heron and the cry of the curlew down by the sea. He went along to the road; climbed over a wire fence; and made his way up a steep bank where there was a clearance among the trees. When he got to the top he was on the side of a deep and almost black chasm—the wooded glen through which came down the little brooklet that passed by the end of the lawn. And there he sat down on the stump of a felled tree; and looked around; and was alone with the night and the stars and the moonlit world.

This glen was smaller and narrower than the one near Inisheen; but it was a far more lovely place; for above and beyond it towered dark hills—rising far and solemnly

into the clear night sky. There was a more spacious view, also; of this broad silver creek running out to meet the wide waters of Bantry Bay; and of wooded islands, and long promontories; and of the dusky shore beyond, that seemed to lie behind the moonlight and was half lost in shadow. Night after night he climbed up to this spot; and of course it was merely to look at the beautiful picture; and to listen to the strange, sad, distant sounds in the stillness. Sometimes a faint perfume of the sea came borne along by the slight stirring of a breeze; sometimes, in a dead calm, before any wind was moving, he thought he could hear a trembling of the great deep in the darkness, and a whisper along the shore. Sometimes, moreover, as he sat there, with the silent hills above, and the great sea beyond, a wild fancy got into his brain that he could hear a voice in the sound of the stream—the stream down there in the dark; it became quite plain—a human voice—so strange—so strange and clear—*Over running water: my life I give to you.* The voice sounded quite close: all trembling he would bend his head forward—might there not be two people there?—or only one voice?—the voice of a girl—who was dead, and gone away from the world—a young girl who used to be associated with all young and beautiful things, like hawthorn, and blue speedwells, and sunlit mornings, when there was a freshness in the air? And then again there would be nothing but the aimless and meaningless murmur of the stream, down there in the ravine; and the awful hills and the sombre sea would have no speech or message for him; and what was the use or value of this throbbing, fretting, tortured insect-life between the dark, dead world and the cold and distant and pitiless skies?

CHAPTER XXVI.

TO THE RESCUE.

ABOUT this time there began to appear in the columns of a London daily newspaper a series of articles which very soon attracted the attention and curiosity of the public. They were a new feature in journalism; some went the length of saying that they were a new feature in English literature. They were called the "Occupations of a Recluse," and professed to give some account of the various pursuits incidental to a quiet country life; but they were in reality a description of solitary rambles by roadside and seashore and stream—a succession of carefully-studied out-of-door scenes that had a quite unaccountable charm about them. For this way of describing nature was not the poetical way of bringing together similitudes; saying that one thing is like another thing, and inviting the imagination to hop the little differences. Nor was it the other way of giving an honest and trustworthy catalogue—a gamekeeper sort of catalogue—of the phenomena of the hedgerow or the wood, leaving the reader who has sufficient time, training, and patience to fill in the light and colour and background of the picture for himself. No; there was something strange in this way of looking at things. There was a minute observation, it is true, put down in the simplest of terms; and there was a certain atmospheric quality that made the picture clear and vivid; but there was more than that; there was a kind of sensitive, pathetic thrill in the writing; these sights and sounds that were so quietly and unobtrusively chronicled seemed interpenetrated

by a subtle human sympathy—rather sad, perhaps, in certain of its undertones. Indeed, to some it seemed that this writer had got behind the veil; that even the sticks and stones and flowers had whispered to him in his solitude: that the silence of the hills had reached to his heart. And very soon—as we shall see presently—he began to abandon even the pretence of writing about definite pursuits. The farther he was allowed to drift, the farther he drifted; until the papers grew to be mainly the reflections of a man who, whether it was a gun he held in his hand, or whether it was a fishing-rod, or whether he was merely looking abroad at mountain and shore and sea, continually found himself face to face with the mysteries of the world, and with the old and sad and insoluble problems of human existence.

Of course such a series of papers looked odd—at the outset at least—in the columns of a London daily newspaper. The editor of that journal was himself at first very doubtful; but something in the writing struck him; and, as his time and attention were then wholly engrossed by a Cabinet crisis, he shoved the manuscript into his pocket, and took it home and showed it to his wife, who, when all his anxieties and interests were confined within the sphere of politics, acted for him as the mouthpiece of the vain clamour of the other and outer world. Now this lady happened to be a person of very keen discrimination in literary matters; and when she had read the first two of these papers, her judgment was prompt and decisive.

"This writing is quite extraordinary," said she. "There is a description of a frosty night settling down over a stretch of bog-land, that made me shiver to my finger-tips."

"It is not news; and it is a newspaper we publish," said her husband, doubtfully.

"I should not care whether it was news or not," said she, "so long as people were interested."

"It is very magazinish," he said.

"Why should the magazines monopolise literature?" she answered.

Well, the experiment was made; and the public, who don't care a pin's point about the traditions of newspaper-offices, seemed to like these quiet and clear pictures of

country life, and began to talk about them even amid the throes of a Cabinet crisis. At first, it is true, they were more obviously practical. There was a good deal of information about dogs and guns, about rabbit-snaring and deep-sea fishing. Even the good Scobell was driven to send for a file of this journal (which he did not regularly see, as it did not express his political views) as he took his seat in the library of his club one evening after dinner; and so charmed was his imagination with some of these sketches that he suddenly exclaimed, "Damme if I don't take a shooting in Ireland this year!" at the same time bringing down his fist on the table, to the excessive alarm of three old gentlemen, who had each been fast asleep in his favourite arm-chair, and who started up to see if the world had come to an end.

But, as has already been hinted, this new writer by slow degrees seemed to feel that he was being allowed a good deal of latitude; and he took advantage of it to frequently wander away from the ostensible purpose of these articles, and to insinuate, rather than to state, a sort of philosophy of human life which had some odd points about it. He seemed to say:—"In this strange transit through the world, from the unknown to the unknown, where should one most naturally look for safe and close companions whose intimacy could not be filched away from us or altered by the fluctuating circumstances of life? Surely in the grand and beautiful things around us which we know to be permanent. The time is so short. Why seek to probe the unsearchable mysteries of the human heart; to secure and imprison the elusive; to stake one's happiness on so unstable a foundation as human affection? Is there anything so variable; so liable to change—nay, to cease? But if the beautiful things of nature were to become our friends and loved ones, then securely year after year could we greet the reappearance of the flowers; and securely day after day could we welcome the wonder of the dawn; and listen to the murmuring and soothing voice of the sea. The friend whom we had trusted might disappoint and betray us; loving eyes might grow cold and take away their love-secrets elsewhere; but he who had chosen the winds and the seas

and the colours of the hills for playmates and constant companions need fear no change. The beautiful human face would fade; nay, death might step in and rob us of our treasure; but the tender loveliness of the sunrise remained, and the scent of summer woods, and the ripple of the rivulet down through the spacious meadows. But then this companionship had to be wooed before it was won; the secret voice had to be listened for; the eye trained to know this wonderful and not evanescent beauty. To such a lover, secure in his possession, what evil could fortune bring? Friend and sweetheart might prove false; but there was no discordant note in the music of the lark; the suspicions and envies and enmities of mankind might appal, but there could be nothing to doubt in the clear, beautiful, blue eye of the speedwell; and even those who had lingered in the fight, until sorely stricken there, might find solace in retiring to these solitudes and seeking out these secret companions; letting the seasons go by peacefully, to the appointed end. '*Then are they glad because they be quiet; so He bringeth them unto their desired haven.*'"

All this was insinuated rather than preached; and it was only here and there that some finely-attuned ear caught the undernote of sadness, and perhaps guessed at its cause. Of course the bruit of these articles reached the house in Hyde Park Gardens; and Miss Chetwynd, who was not a diligent student of newspapers, and had, in fact, missed them, had to hunt them all out one afternoon and read them over to her aunt. What surprised her was that mere sketches of sport, as they seemed, had the effect more than once of giving her a choking at the throat; but nothing was said by way of criticism either by aunt or niece, for the reading was just finished by dinner-time.

At dinner Miss Chetwynd herself introduced the subject, and asked if any one knew who had written these papers.

"I don't," said Dr. Bude, "but what I do know is that it is a thousand pities that fellow is thrown away on literature. Literature does not want him; science does. I can assure you, my dear Mrs. Chetwynd, that an accurate observer is a very rare bird indeed—far more rare among men of science than is supposed. There are so few who

will take the trouble to look patiently; they must jump to their theory at once. What does literature want with that kind of observation? Literature should deal with the mind —with emotions. That fellow, now, should be set to work to observe the habits of beetles or birds, or the action of the tides, or some useful thing like that."

"I confess I was disappointed after all the talk," said Professor Sims, looking over his gold spectacles. "I glanced at one or two of the papers, and found them inconsequential. You began with wild-fowl shooting, but got on to Shakspere and all kinds of things. Then he seemed to me to be interfering with the proper business of the artist—describing what ought to be painted. What is the use of describing the silvery waves that wind makes on a field of long grass?—every one can see that for himself."

"Every one may not be in a position to see it," said Miss Chetwynd, in her gentle and yet pointed way. "This is bringing the picture indoors for you."

"That is not to be described in words—that is for an artist to paint," continued the professor.

"Could he?" she said, quietly.

"But there is something to be said," Dr. Bude interposed again, "for his theory that the eye should be trained to observe the beauty of all manner of simple things, so that you may increase the value of life. That is practical and sensible, it seems to me. Even if you don't give science a lift, you can make a country walk more interesting. He seems to have picked up some curious illustrations of the morphology of plants; though I imagine he has no very minute acquaintance with botany. You have read the papers, Mrs. Chetwynd?" added the tall, lank, dark man.

"Mary has just finished reading them to me."

"What is your opinion then? What is the writer? A man of science excusing himself for idleness? A philosopher taken to shooting snipe? Or an artist taken to literature because his pictures won't sell?"

"I am sure I don't know," said the old lady, rather hesitatingly, and with none of her usual sprightliness. "I was thinking when Mary was reading them that—that if my poor boy had taken to writing, most likely that was the

kind of subject he would have chosen to write about. I liked the papers. They seemed a little sad sometimes—at least, wistful and strange. There is a kind of remoteness about them."

"What is your opinion, then, Miss Mary?" he asked.

Mary Chetwynd started slightly; she had been listening with downcast eyes.

"I?" said she, somewhat slowly. "What I think is that they are written by a man whose heart is broken."

Indeed she seemed preoccupied during dinner; and when the people had gone she went quickly back to the drawing-room, where she had left the cuttings from the newspaper, and set to work to read them carefully over again. Her aunt followed her in a short time, and found her deeply engaged.

"You have no more of the newspaper-articles to read, have you, Mary?"

"No; I was only glancing over them again."

By-and-by she looked up; but the old lady could not see that her niece seemed a little agitated.

"Auntie, surely you must know who has written these papers?"

"I, child?" said Mrs. Chetwynd, absently. "Well, I was dreaming about them. I think he might have written them."

"But, auntie, don't you recognise the place? It is Boat of Garry!"

The old lady sighed.

"Yes, that is what he would have written about—no doubt—the place he was so fond of."

"But, auntie, these articles are written about Boat of Garry! Don't you recognise it all—the creek, and the glen, and the islands, and the sea? Why, the acacia on the lawn is there; and the little marble-topped table; it is like a photograph. Mr. Fitzgerald has written these articles."

"Mr. Fitzgerald? Yes, I should not wonder," said the aunt, though she was obviously still thinking of the nephew whom she had lost. "He is very clever. I suppose he began to write early. I suppose it wants training. But I think—Frank—could have written them."

"What I am thinking of is this, auntie," said her niece, with some touch of feeling in her voice, "that if these articles are written by Mr. Fitzgerald, we have no right to ask him to remain in that loneliness. I—I—suppose he must have met with some sorrow; there it is in every line. I say we have no right to ask him to remain there. I am certain he wrote those papers; didn't you see the reference to the heronry at Glengariff?—and he has put in Bearhaven as clear as can be. And if—if he is in trouble—no matter what it is—it is not for women to let him be there all by himself—eating his heart out in solitude. It isn't human. I'm sure, I never thought how solitary the place would be if one were there alone until I read those articles—we always had plenty of society. It must be dreadful—doesn't it sound dreadful, auntie?"

"Oh no, Mary; he seems so pleased with the birds and the different things around him—— So you think that is Mr. Fitzgerald? Dear me! he has become quite famous, though no one knows his name."

"They'll know it soon enough."

"And that is his life at Boat of Garry that you have been reading to me? Yes, it is like the place too—the gun-room even, and the stuffed birds. You must read them all over again, Mary. Then it was he who saw the young rabbit trot along and tell its father and mother? That was very prettily written; now that I think of it, it must have been in the wood beside the glen, just over the wire fence; I wonder I did not notice before how like it was to the place."

"But you don't seem to understand what I say, auntie; you are so full of dreams and pictures; and I am in the main responsible for Mr. Fitzgerald going to Boat of Garry—and—and—something has got to be put right, auntie."

"Well, then, child, I don't know what you mean, I confess it," the old lady said.

"Mr. Fitzgerald told me something," said Miss Chetwynd, with an unaccustomed flush on the clear cut, intelligent face, "before he left for Boat of Garry; and I guessed more. Do not tell him so, auntie—don't breathe a word of it—but I fancy he has been in some trouble; and that solitary place

must have been a dreadful place to be in. I should have thought of it. It was my fault. But I thought if he were there for a time you would get accustomed to the notion of some friend or other occupying the place; and then that you might let it."

"I have asked you not to speak about that, Mary. I can have only a few years to live; and if for that short time I choose to do what I wish with my own——"

"Auntie dear, don't speak like that to me!" the girl said, going to the old lady, and putting her hand on her shoulder. "Surely you know it was not for my own benefit that I thought of it. It is not money that is likely to come between you and me, I hope."

The aunt took the girl's hand and patted it.

"No, no. You are a good child; I wish you were more saving of your money. Now what is it you want me to do?"

"One of two things, auntie dear. After reading these papers, I am quite distressed to think of Mr. Fitzgerald being there in that loneliness he describes; and I want you to ask him to come back at once."

"Child, I want him to have the place! To whom else could I give it? Who else could have found out the charm of the neighbourhood and written like that? No; I have thought over it, Mary. I could neither sell nor let Boat of Garry; and I would not have it go to the Lawrences, to have all those ill-bred young cubs stamping through my poor Frank's rooms; and what good would it be to you?—you would marry and give it away to somebody I know nothing about."

"If you please, auntie dear, what I have is quite enough," said the tall young lady, somewhat frigidly.

"Oh yes, I know; and anything more you might have you would fling away in Whitechapel," said the old lady, with a smile. "Well, then, why should Mr. Fitzgerald come back? Why should he not become familiar with the place? Why should he not stay for the shooting?"

The niece remained silent for a minute or so.

"Well, then, there is another thing you must do," she said. "I think you and I might go over to Boat of Garry."

"To Boat of Garry!" said the old lady, rather faintly.

"Very shortly now," said Miss Chetwynd, cheerfully, "everybody will be leaving town; and my poor old auntie will have nobody to bring her all the wicked gossip. Why should not we go too?"

"To Boat of Garry, child?" said the old lady, almost reproachfully.

"It is not like you, auntie, to think of refusing to comfort a friend in distress," said her niece.

"But what do I know of his distress?—and what could I do, since I am not to breathe a word about it?"

"Well, auntie, I will tell you the truth," said the girl, frankly. "My conscience is not quite clear. I was mainly responsible for the arrangement; and I am afraid we have been rather cruel. I should like to see how things are going at Boat of Garry; perhaps there will be no need for us to remain; we could pay a short visit and then go on to Killarney. I should feel more at ease. I am afraid Mr. Fitzgerald has got into a sort of morbid state, through being all alone there. That may be very good for his literary prospects, and people may begin and talk about him now, and make him famous; but I would rather have nothing to do with the great god Pan and his fashioning of the reed by the river."

"You are asking a great deal from me, Mary," said Mrs. Chetwynd, after a while.

"I think I am asking what is right, auntie."

"It will be all the old sorrow over again," she said, absently.

"Oh no, auntie, not that; it will only be beautiful memories now. I am sure you would like to see Dan and Wellington again, and Murtough and Kate, and the Ghoul, and old Father Time, and the children up at Knockgarvan."

"It is a terrible thing going into an empty house, child."

"Oh, but it won't be empty, auntie!" said her niece, cheerfully. "We will have the Ballykilloge Barrys over, to show Mr. Fitzgerald, if he is to have the place, what it can contain; and we must drive to Kenmare, to see the old General; and wouldn't Murtough be glad to take us on to Killarney?"

"I never thought to see Boat of Garry again," said the old lady, wistfully.

"Indeed, auntie, if I were going to be so munificently generous as to make a present to a friend of a house and garden and shooting lease, and horses and carriages, and all the rest of it, I do think I should want to see how he liked the place, and if he was properly grateful. How do you know that Mr. Fitzgerald would take it? How do you know but that he sees nothing in the neighbourhood?"

"You can judge by these articles," said Mrs. Chetwynd; but there was a yielding smile on her face.

"You will be able to judge, auntie, when Mr. Fitzgerald drives with us from Glengariff; and then you will see whether we have been too cruel in condemning him to such a solitary banishment. Now that's settled, auntie; and there is not to be another word."

CHAPTER XXVII.

AT BOAT OF GARRY.

MARY CHETWYND read and re-read the "Occupations of a Recluse" until every searching and sensitive phrase seemed to find an echo in her heart; and when at last, one morning towards the end of July, she found herself standing at a window in the hotel at Glengariff, looking out on the beautiful calm bay and the woods and the mountains, it almost appeared to her as if a dream had become a solid reality. For the Recluse had written a good deal about this neighbourhood, though not specifying names; and she recognised the place now, not as she had known it in former years, but as transfigured by the new light and colour he had conferred upon it. It was the dream-picture become real; here were all the points of it—the rose-hedge, the little landing-stage, the wide water, the Martello tower, and the far ranges of the hills. The place had a strange interest for her. It was something other than the Glengariff that she used to know.

Her aunt came into the room.

"I wonder whether Mr. Fitzgerald will come with the carriage," said the niece.

"I have been wondering," said the old lady, doubtfully, "whether we should tell him that we know of his having written these articles."

"It cannot be long a secret; everybody is certain to find out."

"It needed the interposition of a Cabinet Minister before we could make sure," said the aunt, however.

"I was sure from the beginning, auntie. It was only you who must needs go and get Dr. Bude to beg Mr. —— to ask the editor of the *Daily Mirror*. And all that trouble for nothing—you ought to be ashamed of yourself, auntie! Any one could see the papers were written about Boat of Garry."

"Scold yourself, Mary Chetwynd; don't scold me," said the old lady. "There was no trouble about it. You remember what Dr. Bude said the moment I asked him? —that it was difficult for newspaper editors to get at the secrets of Cabinet Ministers, but that the reverse of the process would prove to be easy enough. And a pretty thing it would have been if we had come all this way on a mission of charity and compassion, and found that it was not Mr. Fitzgerald at all who had been writing in the newspapers—what would you have said then?"

There was a rumble of a carriage below in the road.

"Oh auntie, come quick," the niece cried. "Here are Dan and Wellington; and Murtough; and here is Mr. Fitzgerald, too—but what is he doing on the box?"

The old lady went to the window; and when she caught sight of the empty carriage, she inadvertently put her hand on her niece's arm, without saying a word. Then she turned away—her eyes full.

"Oh, I know," said Mary Chetwynd, cheerfully (though in her heart she guessed that Fitzgerald had out of delicacy refrained from presenting himself to the old lady as the occupant of her nephew's place). "I know. Of course you must see the scenery so much better from the box. Of course that is it. Now, auntie dear, are you quite ready? Are all your things sent down?"

"I think so, Mary," said Mrs. Chetwynd, when she had recovered her composure. "You—you must make apologies to Mr. Fitzgerald for our interrupting him. We sha'n't stay long. He may have his own friends coming for the shooting. We don't want the carriage to take us to Killarney, if you wish to go back that way. We can hire."

"I don't think you would get Mr. Fitzgerald to agree to that, auntie," the younger lady said quietly.

Fitzgerald was in the hall when they went downstairs;

and he came up and shook hands with them; and said that their luggage was all in the carriage; and were they ready? In this partial dusk, he did not seem changed at all, except perhaps that his manner was somewhat grave. And he rather avoided observation, as it were; he waited until they went out; and then followed.

But when Mrs. Chetwynd and her niece got into the carriage, they found that the main part of their luggage had been placed on the two seats opposite them, leaving no further room. The Boots of the hotel shut the door.

"Leave that open," said Miss Chetwynd, almost angrily. "Murtough, why is all the luggage down here? Mr. Fitzgerald, they will make room for you in a moment."

"Oh, thank you," said he, going round to the other side. "I will get on the box."

"Certainly not," said she, with promptitude. "You must have seen everything that is to be seen about here many a time. Murtough, take these things up beside you. See, Mr. Fitzgerald, here is your seat cleared. Don't you think that auntie and I have had enough of each other's company during such a long journey?—and we have all the gossip of the neighbourhood to get from you. I suppose old Father Time has a dozen more complaints about the Knockgarvan children?"

So Fitzgerald had to take his seat inside (the previous arrangement had been a cunning device of his own), and away they drove. For a time there was a little embarrassment. He was unaccustomed to new faces; he would rather have been on the box. Then Mrs. Chetwynd had got it so clearly in her mind that he was already the actual owner of Boat of Garry that she kept making little ingenuous excuses for their intrusion. But very soon the light and pleasant humour of Mary Chetwynd, and the clear frankness of her eyes, dispersed these awkwardnesses; and Bantry Bay and all its surroundings began (for him at least) to assume quite a new and cheerful aspect. Boat of Garry, too: did he not know that the old gardener, with his stoop, and his long hair, and his scythe, was familiarly spoken of as "old Father Time"? Had he not observed how Ghoul-like was the engineer, stoker, and captain of the *Black Swan*,

when he raised his head, all smothered in coal-dust, from the yacht's bunkers, and glared through his huge, brass-rimmed spectacles? This landau: had no one told him it was properly called "the Ark;" especially in wet weather, when its vast capacity could have transported half the neighbourhood safely through the rain? Perhaps he had never heard of H.M.S. *Coalscuttle*? At all events, she said, she was pleased to see that the Ghoul had not blown him into the air.

"I think it is very wicked of Mary," said the old lady, "to come and throw ridicule on everything, and make you think light of the place. Perhaps—perhaps it is from old association, but I consider Boat of Garry very pretty."

"Who could say otherwise?" he answered. "It is a beautiful neighbourhood."

"But a bit lonely?" said Mary Chetwynd, timidly.

"Oh no."

She raised her eyes in astonishment.

"You don't find it lonely?"

"Not in the least," said he, simply. "I mean—that is—well, perhaps it might be called lonely—but I find the solitariness of it its chief charm, I think."

She was silent for a second. Then she said good-naturedly—

"Auntie, what do you think of that as a compliment? Why, Mr. Fitzgerald, we thought—we imagined—that you might be rather lonely here—and—and—we thought of giving you the pleasure of our company for a week or two—I mean a few days——"

She was clearly embarrassed; but there was a humorous smile on her face all the time. Then she looked up with her frank clear look.

"I will confess the truth, Mr. Fitzgerald. My dark and nefarious scheme has failed. Auntie won't let Boat of Garry——"

"I don't wish it even talked about," said the old lady, but without sharpness.

"And so you see all my plotting and counter-plotting has only ended in your having been banished away from humankind for all this time——"

"But Boat of Garry is not such a howling wilderness,

Miss Chetwynd," he said, with a smile. "Humanity exists there as elsewhere; and human—folly, shall we say? You don't know what tragic passions may be smouldering in all that quiet. Murtough," he said, lowering his voice somewhat, "has discovered that a man at Adrigole made Kate an offer of marriage before she married Murtough——"

"I know. She came to me about it. Why did the stupid girl not tell her husband? What harm was there in that?"

"Why, none. Only the pitiableness of it," he said absently. "It is merely the old story. When you see three jackdaws flying along together in spring-time, you know what a story of jealousy, and hatred, and madness that means; and how one poor chap is doomed to an inevitable fate. But it appears that the gentleman from Adrigole, having recently taken to drink, and idleness, and Fenianism, and so on, is now desirous of renewing his acquaintance with Kate; so there is to be a tremendous head-smashing when he and Murtough meet."

"I will put an end to that," she said promptly, "for I know Pat Carey's master."

"I am afraid Pat Carey hasn't any master to speak of now," said he. "But Murtough can hold his own."

For a time there was silence; and only the driving through the delicious air; and the opening out of the beauties of the far-reaching Bay. Mary Chetwynd was afraid she had said too much about his loneliness. She could not explain to him, here and now, what she had been guessing about him from these writings. She had been listening to inner secrets when she was reading those papers. Now everything seemed so ordinary and matter-of-fact—as he pointed out where the coal smack had come to grief; or asked Mrs. Chetwynd if she had read Professor Sims's lecture; or got Murtough to stop the carriage so that he could get out to walk a steep part of the road. And yet, sometimes, when he was absently looking away over the wide expanse of water, there was a look in his eyes that told her something she had only imagined, and that convinced her that this visit on the part of her aunt and herself was not so much amiss.

When they swept round the gravel drive and drew up in front of the house, it was Miss Chetwynd's aim to make a rare bustle so that her aunt should have no opportunity of indulging in sad recollections. Sure enough, here was old Father Time, with his scythe, just finishing off the lawn; and here was the pretty Kate, all smiling and pleased; and Mick was sent to bring the dogs; and the Ghoul was to be summoned to report about the new boiler. But indeed Mrs. Chetwynd did not seem to mind as much as had been expected her entering this house. It was far from being an empty house. Everything was noise and turmoil and confusion. And when at last something like order had been restored, and when the three sat down to lunch, Mrs. Chetwynd, so far from being dejected, said, with a smile on the pretty, bright, old face—

"Why, Mary, this is quite like old times."

The luncheon was not a sumptuous one; but the old lady was obviously highly pleased—with something or other.

"Your telegram, Mrs. Chetwynd, came late last night," Fitzgerald said, "and I had to get away early this morning, or I should have tried to get you a sea-trout or a brace of wood pigeons, or something."

"Oh, but this will do capitally," she said. "If Kate would only let us have some wine. I hope you found the wine to your liking, Mr. Fitzgerald?"

"I—I have no doubt it is excellent," said he, flushing somewhat.

"But you don't mean to say you have not tried it—all this time?" said she, staring.

"The beer is very good indeed," said he, evasively.

The old lady looked at her niece, as if to say, "There is something to be amended here;" but she said nothing.

Then she began to cross-examine him about his impressions of the place, and his pursuits, and so forth, just as if she had never heard about the "Occupations of a Recluse." Did he like the situation of the house? The shooting promised to be good this year? And how about the winter—would it not be a terribly dull place in winter? And she was very much surprised that he had not made any use of the *Black Swan.*

"I don't know much about steam-yachts," said he, "but I suppose it costs a good deal in coals before you can get steam up?"

"A trifle—a mere trifle," she said. "Surely it was not that that hindered you?"

"I thought if you were letting the place it might be as well to have a full stock of coals in the boat," said he.

"Never mind, auntie," said the niece. "You and I and Mr. Fitzgerald will all have a famous trip to-morrow, if the day is fine; and we will see what the new boiler can do."

"Not I," said the old lady, with decision. "You two may go if you like. I wish to end my days in a peaceable kind of way."

"Mr. Fitzgerald," said Miss Chetwynd, "have you ever steered a small steam-yacht?"

"I have never been on board one."

"Well, the sensation will be a new one for you—you must not miss it. You will have the pleasing impression that a wild beast has run away with you; and that you haven't the least notion against what it is going to rush. Then the Ghoul is generally below at his fires; and I suppose you don't know much about the navigation at Bantry Bay?"

"Nothing whatever."

"This is still more excellent," she continued gravely. "And when you see the finger of the dial informing you that you are about twenty pounds above the registered pressure, you don't know how to let off the steam, I suppose?"

"Certainly not."

"Capital—capital. It will be the greatest enjoyment of your life. The Ghoul will be below; pressure will be 100 lbs. on the square inch; the wild beast will be running away with you; and you don't know where the rocks are. And yet they say that Boat of Garry is a sleepy, unexciting sort of place!"

"If you don't mind, Miss Chetwynd, I would rather leave the management of that wild war steed to you."

"To me? Oh no. When there is a man on board, of course the man steers. It isn't a woman's place."

"But suppose the man prefers to stay on shore?"

"Then you are afraid?"

"Yes, I am."

"I thought men never acknowledged that."

"It does not much matter whether they acknowledge it or not. If you put a man on a railway-engine, and start it; and send him careering along the line without any power to stop; and then if you ask him whether he is quite happy, and he says 'Yes,' you can judge for yourself whether he is a truthful person."

"Besides," continued the young lady, in the same calm and placid manner, "you know, you have to get the yacht out of the creek first; and the deep channel is about a dozen yards wide; and it twists between rocks; and the currents are fearful."

"Mary Chetwynd!" said her aunt, angrily; and then she turned to Fitzgerald. "I don't know what has got into her head; but she seems determined to put you out of conceit with the whole place. The yacht is as safe as sitting in that easy-chair—why, look at the new boiler! And it is most delightful to be able to go away on a perfectly still day—when an ordinary yacht would be unable to move—and go as far out as you please, and have luncheon there, and come back just when it suits you. I would go with you myself to-morrow——"

"Only——?" said her niece.

"Only what?"

"I wanted to know what the excuse was to be this time, auntie dear," said the imperturbable young lady.

"But I mean to go," said Mrs. Chetwynd, valiantly.

"Now, you know very well, auntie, you are as sensitive as a cat; and the least speck of dirt on your face or on your hands makes you fidgety and miserable; and when H.M.S. *Coalscuttle* does take it into its head to throw up a cloud of wet soot at starting——"

"But we can go below until she has started!" the aunt said.

"Who is to steer, then?"

"Mick can steer."

"He knows no more of the rocks than the man in the

moon. Besides, would you miss the expression of the Ghoul's face when he gets to the Narrows?"

"Come away, Mr. Fitzgerald," said the old lady, "and we will have coffee outside. If you stay here any longer Mary will persuade you that sea air is poisonous, and that Boat of Garry is celebrated for smallpox."

Now this fighting, which had been brought about of set purpose by Mary Chetwynd, had the desired effect of tying down the attention of the old lady to the affairs of the moment; and it was wonderful with what little concern—how easily and naturally—she now took her accustomed seat on the bench outside the porch and looked around. The ordeal she had feared was no ordeal at all. She was regarding the trim-cut lawn, and the masses of rhododendrons, and the openings through the trees which revealed glimpses of the sea and distant hills; and she was thinking that for a man of letters no more desirable haven of rest could have been found. Was it a wonder that he had written those charming papers in this dream-like quiet? The world seemed filled with sunlight here; and yet there was a slight, cool breeze coming over from the sea to temper the heat; and as it passed along it stirred some lime-trees down there by the rivulet, and the sweet scent was all around. And the old lady was very pleased to see the place looking so beautiful; and she was pretty sure in her own mind that a contemplative student would be glad enough to have it as a gift, and to remain there for a portion of the year at least, and do the best work of which he was capable in it, and perhaps also submit to be bothered —for a week or two in the summer—by a visit from two idle women escaping into this gracious quiet from the clang of London life.

Occupied by this pleasing fancy, the old lady, accompanied by the two younger people, now set out on an inspection of the place. Father Time received high praise for the condition of the garden. Then they visited the kennel and the stables and the fowl-house and what not; and, as the day was so beautiful, Mrs. Chetwynd said she thought she could walk as far as the shore, and have a look at the *Black Swan* lying at her moorings.

But to do this they had to return to the house and take a road leading somewhat inland from the marshy stretches lying alongside the creek; and they were leisurely walking along, chatting and watching birds and butterflies and so forth, when Fitzgerald suddenly discovered that right ahead of them, at some distance, stood the Knockgarvan bull, calmly contemplating them, and apparently disposed to contest their right of way. It was an awkward, even a serious, situation. He knew the beast and its ill-temper; and had, indeed, passed it several times, though on these occasions he had been accompanied—as was his wont in going about—with one or other of the dogs, and when there is a dog about the bull does not pay much attention to its master. However, now there was no help for it; there was no gate for the two women to go through, no wall for them to get behind; and he knew very well that the first symptom of fear or retreat would be the first inducement for the bull to pursue. Moreover, he dared not even tell his companions of their danger; for he was afraid the old lady might scream and try to run away, and there was absolutely no shelter. So he continued talking in a loud and unconcerned way, carefully keeping a short distance ahead of the two ladies.

"Oh yes, Mrs. Chetwynd," he was saying (with an anxious eye on the bull all the time), "that purple loosestrife is a very handsome plant when you see it growing by the wayside—very handsome—yes—splendid colour out-of-doors——"

Here he had come within stone's throw of the bull, which stood immovable but for the angry twisting about of its tail. He picked up a pebble and carelessly shied it at the animal.

"Get out of that!" he growled—with apparent indifference—and forthwith continued his talking.

"—but it is worth nothing in-doors. It does not tell in a room. It loses the pink and becomes purple. I told Mick to cut a lot, and meant to put them in the dining-room when you came; but I found they would not do——"

Here the animal gave a low, warning bellow; but there

was nothing for it. He kept on talking; always a little ahead of his companions; and he knew the time was come, for good or ill.

"Mr. Fitzgerald," said Mrs. Chetwynd, anxiously, "hadn't we better go back?——"

"Oh no," said he, carelessly. "Come along. It is only one of the Knockgarvan beasts strayed down from the farm. *Get out of the way, will you?*"

He lifted this time a big stone—what in those districts is called a rock—and pitched it at the brute, intending to miss him. By dire mischance the lump of stone landed on the animal's nose; and Master Willie's heart at the same moment leapt to his mouth, for he was convinced that the beast would not endure such an insult. But slowly and sulkily, and with deep mutterings and twisting of the tail, the coward brute yielded its dignity, and crossed a ditch and went into the adjoining pasture. Fitzgerald was much too prudent to try a repetition of the stone-heaving. He let well alone.

"I was saying," he continued, as if nothing had happened, "that loosestrife isn't good for lighting up a room. Foxgloves are better; but even they are too purple. Now a splendid show of wildflowers is to get the marigolds that grow in the corn here; and mix them up with meadow-sweet——"

He cautiously turned his head; the bull—at some distance—was regarding them, but evidently not inclined to follow. In a few more minutes they were down at the little landing-slip; and here was the Ghoul, otherwise Sheil Glanny—a great, awkward-looking man, with bushy black hair and brass-rimmed spectacles—seated on the beach, tarring a broken-down old punt.

"Sheil," said Fitzgerald to him, under his breath, "haul in the boat there; and I'll row the ladies out to the yacht. And then you'll go back to the house, and tell Mick to bring a couple of the dogs along the road, and drive the Knockgarvan bull up to the farm. And you'll tell him to tell the boy that the next time he lets the beast go wandering down here like that, I'll come up with a stick and beat him till he's black and blue."

"Sure I'll do it mesilf now, sir," said Sheil, looking about for an instrument.

Then it occurred to Fitzgerald that this was a most injudicious threat, seeing how near the shooting season was.

"No," said he; "Mick is to give the boy this shilling, and say I am much obliged to him for keeping his dog from hunting; and while the ladies are here, would he see that the bull is kept up at the farm?"

"Very well, sir," said Sheil, going away rather down-faced, and no doubt thinking that it was throwing away a shilling when a beating would have done as well or better.

So Fitzgerald got into the big boat and rowed the two ladies (he noticed that Mrs. Chetwynd kept a hand tightly grasping the gunwale all the time, though the water was like glass) out to the *Black Swan* and got them on board. She was a smart enough looking yacht of about fifty feet in length, with a small cabin aft, and a larger one forward; and as there was a pretty strong odour of new paint about, it was clear that Sheil Glanny had been occupying his spare time usefully. Indeed so anxious did the old lady seem that Fitzgerald should express approval of the little yacht that even her niece refrained from making disrespectful comments; nay, she even undertook to make a cup of tea for them, until she found that all the small lockers were locked and that there was neither tea nor anything else to be got at on board.

"I think she is a beautiful little boat; and very handy and convenient," said Fitzgerald, to the old lady's great delight. "I had no idea there was such room in her. Why, half-a-dozen people could sleep on board. And with that twisting channel down at the mouth of the creek, a sailing-yacht would never be able to get in here. To-morrow, then, Mrs. Chetwynd, would you like to take a trip; for I will tell Sheil about getting up steam?"

"If—if you wish it," said Mrs. Chetwynd, rather doubtfully.

"Don't drive auntie into a corner," said the niece, laughing. "She would be trembling all the time. No; she shall come down to the beach; and I will go with you,

if you like, for I know the way down the creek; and we will have a short run out and back, and pick up auntie again. How will that do?"

"It will do very well," said the old lady, "if you are not in one of your scornful moods. But when Mr. Fitzgerald knows you a little better, he will know when you are speaking the truth and when you are not."

When they got back to the house again (there was no bull to contest their passage this time) Fitzgerald took out his fishing-rod, and said he was going down to the stream to see if he could get a sea-trout for their dinner; while the two ladies had tea brought them to the little table outside the porch.

"Mary," said Mrs. Chetwynd, after a time—what a beautiful, quiet, golden afternoon it was!—"I wish you would write to Mr. M'Gee, and ask him to come over and see me. Or we can send up the yacht for him, if that will suit him best."

"Very well, auntie," said the younger lady, dutifully; "but I think you are making a mistake."

"Why?"

"I have seen it brewing all day long. The place looks pretty; Mr. Fitzgerald is pleased with it, and you are proud of it; and you have gone back to your old notion of giving it to him."

"Well?"

"What would he do with it? He has no money to keep it up, as poor Frank had. You couldn't expect him to live here all his life, in any case—a young man like that, with a great career before him. Why, you'd never even have the satisfaction of seeing him to let him say 'Thank you' for your kindness. Besides, I wouldn't trust the conveyancing of a valuable property to Mr. M'Gee."

"Really, Mary," said her aunt, with a little laugh, "you must have been thinking about it as much as I have all day. But some of your objections meet each other. I don't want Mr. M'Gee to convey the property; but to come over and make a calculation as to what would be necessary to keep it up, as it stands. When I present a picture I like to present it framed. And then, no doubt,

if what people say about these writings is true, no doubt Mr. Fitzgerald would have to live a part of the year in London; and I am sure you would be as glad to see him as I should be—for the more I see of him I like him the better; and—and—in a measure I should like him to be to us what—what my poor boy was. Well, that means money. That means an allowance, Mary. Do you think he is not deserving of it?"

"I wouldn't say that, auntie dear. But all the deserving people don't meet with such a kind friend. I suppose he will continue to write? You know, auntie—now don't be cross, for I am only talking common sense—I think you were too good to poor Frank; and many a time I wished he would give up his hunting and come and do some kind of useful thing——"

"Now, Mary, that is enough," said the aunt—but without anger. "We are not all reformers and politicians like you. If my poor boy pleased himself, that is enough for me; that is what I like to think of. But there's always good sense in what you say, Mary. Of course, I should not dream of making Mr. Fitzgerald such an allowance as would make him independent and careless. Oh no. But I think I can trust the lad. I like the look of his eyes. And if he cannot be everything that my boy was to me—well, at my time of life one is glad to be able to do what kindness one can; and I don't see any one else to whom I would rather give Boat of Garry."

The niece was silent for a little while.

"Auntie," said she at length, "if you are quite resolved upon this, will you allow me to tell him to-morrow?"

"Yes; why not?"

"There are one or two things I should like to say to him—if you don't mind."

"Why not? Who knows all the circumstances of the case better than you? Well, now, Mary, I am going to my room to lie down for a while; but you may come and knock at my door before dinner."

Master Willie was not fortunate that afternoon, for there was not a breath of wind, and the surface of the pools was like glass; and he was returning to the house rather dis-

heartened—not knowing that the Ghoul had got two splendid flounders, a cod, and a skate in his drift net, and that Mick, who had been sent up the hill, was bringing back a brace of mountain hares and a couple of teal—when he met Miss Chetwynd. She was trying to plait rushes; and not succeeding very well.

"Mr. Fitzgerald," said she, looking up with those clear, blue-gray eyes of hers, "was not that rather an ill-tempered bull we met this afternoon?"

"It does not like strangers."

"And we were in some danger?"

"Well," said he, hesitatingly, "something might have happened."

"I thought so," she said, regarding him. "And yet you would not tell us we were in danger."

"What would have been the use? I should only have frightened your aunt and made more mischief."

"If my aunt had not been there, would you have told me?"—and for a second her frank, shrewd, enquiring eyes met his.

"Yes, I think I would have told you," he said.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE BLACK SWAN.

MARY CHETWYND'S manner was ordinarily marked by a perfect ease and simplicity; it seemed to suit the sincerity of her eyes; women noticed it and found her companionable; sick children were glad to be nursed by her; poor people did not become self-conscious when she entered their door; at her aunt's table she spoke to guests and servants in precisely the same voice; she had the same smile, the same frank look for every one. All this pertness of humour she had displayed since their arrival at Boat of Garry had been assumed; but it had answered its purpose; the old lady had taken quite naturally to the place; there were no fits of despondency or gloomy reminiscences. But when she herself drew near the true object of their visit, she became more grave; and again and again found herself wishing that these explanations were well over. At all events, chance provided her with an ample opportunity of making them.

Next morning Mrs. Chetwynd had almost resolved to go on board the *Black Swan*, and even went down to the shore of the creek with them; but at the last moment she changed her mind, and said she would go to the hill above the house, from which she could see them sail away out into Bantry Bay and back. But this hesitation had caused delay; and when at length Miss Chetwynd and Fitzgerald and Mick the keeper got on board the little yacht they found the Ghoul in a state of great excitement and impatience. There was a rapid ebb tide running;

steam was up to within five pounds of the extreme registered pressure; the donkey-engine was rattling away as if it were in a tin box; and Sheil Glanny was here, there, and everywhere—at the moorings, at the furnace-door, at the waste-pipe, at the coals. And then, before Fitzgerald fairly knew where he was amid all the uproar, he found himself with a rope in his hand, and the rope was attached to a hauling and jerking and throbbing iron tiller, and he knew that the *Black Swan* was forging ahead just anywhere, for the condensers had not arrived, and he was enveloped in steam, not even the bow of the boat being visible.

"Miss Chetwynd," he called aloud—for the Ghoul was down in the bunkers again—"have you any notion where we are going?"

"Not the least," said she. "But Micky is at the bow."

However, the steam abated, or else the wind freshened; at all events, he began to get glimpses of his surroundings, and strove as near as he could to keep this raging little beast in mid-channel. And what a noise it made!—or rather a succession of noises, each distinct, and each sharply following the other! And then there was still another—a sudden, brain-dividing shriek, twice repeated; and he saw that Miss Chetwynd had hold of the brass chain of the steam-whistle.

"That is a signal to auntie: do you think she will hear?" she said—or shouted.

"Hear?" he answered. "They will hear it at New York. I believe you have killed every curlew within six miles of us."

Then, to his unspeakable satisfaction, the great black-headed creature with the big brass-rimmed spectacles came on deck again, and assumed charge of the tiller, calling Mick along to help at the same moment. It was evident they were approaching the dreaded Narrows. Now and again in the deep clear water some sudden flashes of golden-brown were seen—the long arms of the seaweed. Far ahead there were some strange-looking swirls—silver curlings on the glassy blue; though no rocks were visible. Moreover, as they drew nearer and nearer to this narrow

channel it was very apparent that the tide was flowing seaward like a mill-race.

"We should have started an hour before," said Miss Chetwynd, looking rather apprehensively at the swirling water.

"At all events we can't turn and face that tide now," her companion observed.

The Ghoul was paying heed not to them, but to the course of the water and the lie of the shore. Then he shouted—

"Hard over, Mick!"

Fitzgerald lent a hand, too; and the iron tiller was jammed over. Of course he looked to see the yacht swing round. She did nothing of the kind. The current was too much for her steering way.

There was a slight scratch—a sort of grating sensation—only for the briefest possible point of time. Fitzgerald looked at Miss Chetwynd—with a natural sort of enquiry; for she knew more about this performance than he did. He found she was regarding him—and waiting.

They had not long to wait. In fact the whole thing had happened before they had had time to think. Immediately following that grating scratch along the keel there was a distinct and solid bump that shook the yacht from stem to stern; the Ghoul sprang forward to shut off the steam; there was the slightest tilting over of the boat; and then, after all this excitement and noise, the strangest imaginable silence. Everybody stood still, doing nothing. The Ghoul looked away astern, in a reproachful kind of way. Then Fitzgerald began to wonder whether she was aground on rock, or on shingle, or on mud; and whether she would remain upright. And then various examinations and surmises and suggestions resolved themselves to this—that they were stuck here for five hours at least, with the compensation that the summer day was beautiful and around them a perfect and delicious quiet.

"You know, Miss Chetwynd," Fitzgerald said, at length, "Micky and I might manage to get you ashore in the boat. We should be whirled along a good bit; but that would only give you another quarter of a mile to walk back to the house."

"Would you have me desert the ship?" she said. "What might become of Sheil, if he were left alone? You could never pull the boat back to the yacht against that current. Besides, when the tide rises high enough to float the yacht again, who knows what will happen?"

"But five hours——" said he.

"Mr. Fitzgerald," said she, somewhat diffidently, "I—I have some things to tell you that—that won't take up five hours perhaps; but that will give you plenty to think over for that time."

"Not too serious?" he said.

"Oh no, not at all. I hope not," she said.

So they had to set to work to make themselves comfortable during this enforced detention. Fortunately, the *Black Swan*, when she ran into the bed of shingle and seaweed, fixed herself without much of a list; and the deck stools were quite serviceable. Sheil Glanny had gone below to bank up his fires and let off some of the steam; and Mick had accompanied him. These two, then, were practically alone in this shining, silent world of sky and sea, with the slow-sailing white clouds mirrored in the blue expanse of water, and the slight hissing all around them of the currents swirling between the rocks.

Mary Chetwynd's manner, as has already been said, was in ordinary circumstances marked by a perfect ease and self-possession; she never seemed to have to think twice about what she was going to say; she always appeared to be on the most simple and friendly terms both with herself and with everybody around her. Now, however, it was clear that she was embarrassed. She remained silent for a time; her eyes were fixed on the deck; once or twice she opened and shut her sun-shade aimlessly. And when she did speak, she jumbled nearly all the things she had to say together, in a very incoherent way.

"Mr. Fitzgerald—I—I don't think you and I have been quite fair to each other. I—I have been reading those papers in the *Daily Mirror*—I did not know you thought about such things—and then I am afraid you have not been quite happy here—and auntie wants to give you the

place—and hopes you will stay here—and I want you to go away."

Her fingers were trembling.

"It is so difficult to make explanations," she said. "But I feel that it was inconsiderate of me to ask you to come here——"

What could make her so timid and almost distressed? —she who ordinarily did not seem to know what nervousness meant.

"I hope you won't think of it," he said, hastily coming to her rescue—and with an embarrassment about equal to her own. "Yesterday you seemed concerned about it also. Please don't think of it for a moment. I assure you it is a very good thing for people to be alone sometimes; it makes them find out something about themselves. Surely it is not a trumpery matter like that that you want to speak about for five hours, Miss Chetwynd? I assure you I have enjoyed the time tremendously since I was here—I don't expect ever to have such a holiday again as long as I live. But who told you I wrote those papers in the *Mirror?*"

"Who told me?" she said, with her face brightening; for now the awkwardness of beginning was over; and here was a solid, practical subject that involved no danger. "They did. Every line—though I don't think you ever wrote quite in that way before. Auntie herself would have led me to suspect; for she thought they were like what our poor Frank might have written, just as she thought about the other papers in the *Household Magazine.* So there must be some similarity; but yet I see a great difference——"

Here she flushed slightly; and immediately said—

"I wonder, now, if you know here what an impression they have made on the public? I suppose not. Do you know that every one is talking about them—as something quite new in literature? And the weekly papers have been saying the nicest things about them, especially the *Liberal Review*——"

"No—not the *Liberal Review?*" said he, quickly.

"Oh yes, indeed. Again and again. When you go back to London you will find yourself quite famous."

That topic ought not to have been distasteful to a young author; but he merely said—

"I have had some letters about them. And invitations to contribute elsewhere. One publisher, indeed, wants to reprint them. If that were done, and if the public cared to read them in that form, I might be able, after all, to gain some little footing in literature—enough for a beginner. I *had* begun to despair. I was at it a long time; and of course one does not like to confess oneself a failure; and I should like to have a definite way of earning a living besides. But don't bother about my affairs, Miss Chetwynd."

"I must," she said, brightly—for she was glad the ice was broken. "I have been entrusted by auntie with the duty of telling you that she is more bent than ever on asking you to take over Boat of Garry——"

"I remember. It is very kind of her, I am sure," he said, "but in my circumstances it would be worse than useless."

"Yes; so she understands," said his companion, calmly. "You mean that you could not afford to keep up the place. Every one must see that. But what auntie says is that when she presents a picture to any one she presents it framed; and, of course, she would see that you had enough to keep up Boat of Garry properly. More than that—and this is where my interest comes in—you would have quite enough to have rooms in London besides, and you might spend as much of the year there as you wished; in fact, you would have your entire time at your disposal."

He was regarding her with astonishment, almost with incredulity.

"I do believe," she said, with a slight, humorous smile, "that you think I am going to ask you for a subscription to my charities."

"No," said he, "I was wondering why your aunt should be so kind to me. This is overwhelming——"

"Oh, do you wish to know why poor old auntie is kind? You had better leave that to the philosophers. It is a way she has. And in this instance I don't oppose her. I hope auntie will live many years yet; and I don't see the fun of

keeping up Boat of Garry for the benefit of Mr. M'Gee. Now, Mr. Fitzgerald, as auntie doesn't talk any longer of asking you to give up your name as a condition, I have no doubt you will become the owner of Boat of Garry, and you will be your own master, and have all your time at your disposal. Very likely auntie may expect you to spend most of the year here. I hope you will not. You will be in a position to be of very great use in the world. Of what use would you be here? It would be all very well to use Boat of Garry as a place of recuperation—after work done; but it would be selfish—at least, so it seems to me—if you were merely to settle down here to enjoy yourself, even in the most innocent way, with those delightful rambles that you describe. Mr. Fitzgerald," she said, after a second, "I don't think you have been fair to me. You have met me among some scientific people; and you think I care for nothing but science. You think I am heartless. Well, let that be as it may; it is of no consequence; but at all events I think this—that those who are well off, and in a position where they enjoy the comforts of life in peace and security, should remember how these things were made possible to them—simply through the best people, century after century, doing their best—and they ought to have some gratitude, and be willing to lend a hand at the same work, for the benefit of those who are in less favoured circumstances. I don't like to talk about what some of us are trying to do among the poor in the East-end of London; for it isn't very picturesque; and it does not appeal much to sentiment; and then it is so easy to impute motives. Well, I don't care much what the motive is, if the result is the same. Very likely, doing charitable actions is only another form of self-gratification; and I suppose I consider myself a superior person; but let us take the case of a sick woman who can't stir from her bed to look after the poor room and kitchen, and she is afraid her husband, when he comes home at seven, will be discontented, and go away to the public-house, and suppose you take one of your district nurses to the place and say to her, 'Well, never mind about the physic; she can help herself to that if the bottle is marked; but you look round in the evening, between six

and seven, and give the place a bit smartening up, and have hot water for the husband's tea, against his coming home, and stir the fire, and have one or two illustrated papers about'—well, perhaps, to see the look of gratitude on the sick woman's face is only to flatter your self-love; I don't say it is not; but ask the poor woman what is her opinion —whether she would have that done for her, or have the house left to its discomfort and squalor, and her husband turn out and leave her alone."

"I don't think," said he, slowly, "that I should be quick to impute motives, if you would tell me what it is you are doing there."

"Oh, but when I find a sympathetic listener," she said, with a laugh, "I am dreadful. I know so many stories that are interesting to me, because I know the people; but they cannot be so interesting to others——"

"You see, Miss Chetwynd," he continued, "short of a miraculous rising of the tide, we are stuck fast here for four hours and a half——"

"And you would have four hours and a half description of our lectures and entertainments, our Sunday services, and district nurses, and open-air spaces, and our window flower-boxes, and all that? Oh no. Some other day, perhaps. At this moment, Mr. Fitzgerald, it has occurred to me that you might ask whether there is anything that might serve for lunch on board this shipwrecked boat."

"I believe there is a tin of biscuits," said he.

"That will do excellently."

"Shall I bring them now?"

"If you please."

Accordingly he went down into the little cabin, and handed up, not only the biscuits, but also two bottles of soda-water and two clean tumblers; so that they had a most wholesome, if somewhat simple, banquet on deck, on this fair warm summer day. And insensibly she began to tell him something of her own troubles; for it appeared that those charitable people were not all of one mind; and, besides certain schemes and organisations of her own planning, it turned out that she belonged to one or two societies of kindred intent.

"And I do so want somebody to back me up," she said. "You must know I am a dreadful heretic and innovator, Mr. Fitzgerald—I am the champion of beer."

"Oh indeed," said he.

"You know, it is easy enough to get on with the boys' entertainments; all they want as a bribe is a biscuit or two, with some apples, or nuts if it is not apple time. And then we are doing good service to the country by reading them patriotic poetry or stories of bravery at sea; and showing them a bit of practical science by means of a magic lantern; or even hinting that a boy should be too proud to steal, and not refrain simply from fear of the police-station. But the men: what I say is, how can you expect the Stepney workman, or the costermonger from Shadwell, or the tired labourer from the docks to come and sit out a lecture on ventilation or some such thing, with nothing to make him comfortable but a cup of tea, which gets cold directly, and with his pipe in his pocket? I say it is asking too much. I say it is not common sense. What harm is there in letting each man have his pint of light ale—I am afraid they would not take to the Bavarian beer, though that would be the safest—and his pipe? I did not like it at first; but now I can stand a hall-full of men smoking pipes. One must not be too particular. I was amused not long ago at the bravery of Lady ——, who came down to see how we were getting along. She came to a boys' entertainment, in a very low neighbourhood—to tell you the truth, Mr. Fitzgerald, I suspect about one-third of them were thieves; but all the same she stood at the door as they went out and shook hands with each of them and complimented them on their good behaviour. And the next night I had got them together, I thought I would tell them that Lady —— was a great friend of the Queen's; and one small chap said immediately, 'Please, Miss, did the lady ever shake hands with the Queen?' You can see what the poor little fellow meant, that he had shaken hands with some one who had shaken hands with the Queen. But there again, that shows the imprudence of allowing strangers to come among us out of mere curiosity, for they would call that snobbishness——"

"What does it matter what they call it?" said Fitzgerald, with some warmth.

"I thought it was very pretty of Lady —— to shake hands with each of the boys; and I take no shame to myself that I told them she was a friend of the Queen's. It is very easy to criticise when you don't have to face the actual circumstances. I know it took me some time before I could bear the tobacco-smoke. I tried a mean way of getting out of it by presenting them with good tobacco; but that was no use; they would not smoke mine; I suppose it was too delicate. Oh, did you hear what Mr. Scobell did just before we left London?"

"No, I think not."

"He sent me another three hundred filters!—just think of it. So there will have to be another big lecture and a distribution as soon as we get back."

Apparently this young lady with the clear eyes and the bright smile had found a sufficiently sympathetic listener, for the time passed quite unobserved as she described all this work that was going on. They did not even notice that the tide was now flowing in; that one or two shallow banks, where the heavy sea-tangle had lain exposed in the sun, were now covered by the sea again; and that the Ghoul was watchful and anxious.

All at once the *Black Swan* was found to be moving; but it was only a list from one side to the other; that was so sharp, however, that it very nearly threw everybody into the water. And then as the tide rose she gradually righted; Sheil Glanny, finding she was deep enough astern, ventured upon backing her off; there was just enough room to turn; and the next minute the *Black Swan* was sailing right up the creek again, while a shrill scream or two from the steam-whistle would tell the Boat of Garry people of her return. And then the throbbing and puffing and churning came to a sudden end; in renewed quiet the little yacht cut its way through the glassy water; with the boat-hook Mick dexterously made a grab at the moorings; and presently the two voyagers were on their way to the shore.

"There now, Mr. Fitzgerald," she said, as they walked along the road together to the house, "have I been the

whole day talking to you about heaps of things that you cannot take any interest in; and all that I meant to say to you I have forgotten. Except this—please don't stay at Boat of Garry when it becomes yours—at least not always. I am very, very sorry I asked you to come here—I would not have done so if I had thought you were going to write about it like that—I am very, very sorry——"

She was speaking in rather a low voice, with her eyes downcast.

"But why?" said he, good-naturedly. "Any place is solitary when one is alone; and this place is most beautiful—that is all the difference. But do you really think," he added, more thoughtfully, "that these papers have made an impression on the public?"

"Most certainly," said she, with her face brightening. "Who could doubt it? Or is there any wonder that people should be grateful for having it pointed out that the common things of the world are far more beautiful than they had fancied? Does it not make life a little richer?"

"But I had nothing to do with that," said he, absently. "I was only repeating John Ross—my artist friend, you remember, Miss Chetwynd: I was only pointing out what he had shown me. No, why I asked was with the fancy that perhaps now I could earn something in literature. Perhaps there might be a prospect for me now; indeed, I think so myself, from one or two offers that I have received. Pray forgive me, Miss Chetwynd," he added, suddenly recollecting himself, "for talking about my affairs to you; but indeed I might say that you yourself are concerned——"

"I?" she said, with something like a start.

"In a measure," he continued. "I should like to go back to London soon, I think——"

"Oh, I am glad of that!" she exclaimed, with very obvious eagerness.

"And if matters go well," he said, "you know you hinted about a contribution to all these varied charities of yours—I say, if matters go well, you will perhaps allow me to give you a contribution."

She laughed lightly. She did not think it was probable he was so soon to become rich.

"What will your contribution be?" she said, idly, as he opened the big iron gate for her.

"Well," said he, "if your aunt would consent——"

"My aunt. What has she to do with it?"

"Oh, a great deal," he continued, as they walked along the gravel path up to the house. "I was thinking, if she had no great objection, my contribution ought to be——"

"Not two hundred pounds a year?" she suggested, rather jokingly.

"No," he answered, looking round at the beautiful place. "I was thinking that my contribution ought to be—Boat of Garry."

CHAPTER XXIX.

PLANS AND DREAMS.

"Now, auntie dear," said Mary Chetwynd, as she put her hat on the hall-table, and smoothed her hair, and went into the room, "I know you are going to scold me."

"Indeed I am," said the old lady, with some astonishment and indignation. "Where have you been? To Limerick? To Queenstown? Scold you, indeed!—no wonder!——"

"Oh, but I don't mean about that," her niece said. "That was unavoidable. We have been close by all the time—stuck fast. I daresay you were afraid of the bull and came straight home; but if you had only climbed up the hill high enough, you might have had the pleasure of contemplating us for the last five hours. Only another little adventure: one gets used to them on board the *Black Swan.*"

"How provoking now!" Mrs. Chetwynd exclaimed. "The very first time that Mr. Fitzgerald goes to try the yacht! Of course he will think she is always getting into trouble——"

"Isn't she, auntie dear?"

"What was Sheil Glanny about?" said the old lady, angrily.

"Now, auntie, you need not quarrel with Sheil Glanny. The real cause of the accident was yourself. You kept pretending you wished to go, just to assure Mr. Fitzgerald that nothing could be more delightful than a trip in the *Coal-scuttle;* and so we were late in starting; and at the Narrows

the current came after Sheil Glanny as if it wanted to swallow him; and then we found ourselves quietly shelved. Now, auntie, tell me; as I have been talking to Mr. Fitzgerald for these five mortal hours, haven't I done my best to make up for the silence he must have endured here? And what will he think about women's tongues after that?"

"I have not the least doubt," said the old lady, peevishly, "that you were all the time trying to make him discontented with Boat of Garry."

"No, not quite so bad as that," said the young lady. She was seated with her back to the window, and the afternoon sun touched the outline of the prettily-shaped head, leaving the face in shadow. "But still bad enough to merit a scolding. I am quite prepared for it. For indeed, auntie, Mr. Fitzgerald seemed quite surprised when I told him what a stir these writings of his had made; and naturally he wishes to get back to London, which is the proper place for a literary man; and no doubt he is ambitious——"

"Yes, and no doubt," said her aunt, "you encouraged him in thinking of leaving Boat of Garry, the very place where he found just such things as he could write about, and you urged him to go to London, where he will have no speciality at all——"

"Auntie," said Mary Chetwynd, "a man who can write like that can write about anything; it is not a question of place or opportunity. Why, you know," she continued, "that all that description of the sea, or of the night-time, or salmon-fishing, or any occupation of the moment, is only an excuse? Surely you can feel that there is something that is behind all that—something that gets hold of people though they can scarcely tell how. I will undertake to say he could make a description of daybreak in Whitechapel as mysterious and wonderful and interesting as a description of daybreak at Killarney. Do you think he is going to lose his eyes because he goes to London?"

Miss Chetwynd glanced outside to make sure there was no one there.

"What the secret of it is I don't know," she said, "only he seems to give you the sensation that all the inanimate things in the world are alive, and watching you, and patiently

sympathetic. Don't you remember, auntie, Mrs. Sims's solemn vow that never again would she put on her table flowers that had been forced white in cellars? I told that to Mr. Fitzgerald to-day; and he laughed and said it was nonsense; but I thought it was a very pretty compliment. I want to show him what we are doing in the East-end; I think he would understand quick enough, and not misjudge us. Mind, I will confess this; for a long time I thought he was merely a sentimental sort of person like——"

"Like me: go on," said the old lady, with a gracious smile.

"No, not like you at all; but like the people who are delighted to read pathetic stories of the poor, and who admire kindness in the abstract, but who would not forfeit their own dinner to keep a whole household from starvation, and who would shudder with horror if they were asked to put a sponge to a child's dirty face. Well, we all make mistakes, I suppose. Those papers showed me I was mistaken about him, anyway. There is something deeper than sentiment in his nature. And—and—" continued the young lady, with a certain embarrassment, for she seemed to become conscious that she had been talking very frankly, "—and I am glad he is going away from here—if only for a time; for I was uneasy about my share in his coming; and if he were once away, don't you see, dear auntie, he could decide about coming back or not just as he pleased, and that would be his own doing. Now I am ready to be scolded."

"For what, then?"

"Oh, perhaps I have not come to the worst," said the penitent. "You know, you said I might tell him of your kind intentions, auntie; and he was very grateful—no wonder; and even astonished, for he asked why you should be so kind, whereupon I referred him to the philosophers who can explain why the sky is blue. But did I tell you how interested he seemed when I told him all that is going on down there in the East-end? Did I? Very well; when he began to talk about his literary prospects, and of the chance of his gaining an independent position that way, what do you think he proposed?—to give me a contribution!"

"After five hours' talking, what less could he do? I think you deserved it."

"But his contribution, auntie dear,—always with your consent, mind—he said he should like to be Boat of Garry."

"I don't understand you."

"He meant that—that, if you didn't mind, auntie—he would give us Boat of Garry, or what it might fetch rather——"

"He shall not; he shall not," said the old lady, with decision. "You may play ducks and drakes with your own money, Mary; but no one shall go and throw away my poor Frank's place on Shadwell or Stepney. I won't hear of it——"

"But if you say not, then not it must be," remarked the young lady, good-naturedly. "Of course he could not do such a thing without your consent——"

"I shall not allow it. Why, the idea! Is that all he cares for the place?"

But here Miss Chetwynd grew alarmed. She knew not what mischief she might not have done.

"Auntie dear," she said, with some eagerness, "there is no use to say another word about it. It was only a suggestion. I think he deserves credit for entertaining such a generous fancy, if only for a moment. Would you find many young men—fond of riding, and shooting, and all that—willing to part with such a place? And the idea that he does not appreciate it; or recognise its beauties! But I am sure, auntie dear, you would not be the one to stand in the way of a young man making a great reputation for himself? And that is why I think he ought to go away—at least for a time—and establish himself in London. Give him Boat of Garry, by all means, auntie; and the frame of the picture, too; but you would not make the conditions too rigorous; you could not expect him to remain here always; no doubt he would be glad enough to come here from time to time—the winter shooting, he says, is excellent——"

"Mary Chetwynd," said her aunt, with a severity that was in great part assumed, "you are trying to throw me

off the scent. I can see what you are after. You wish me to put Mr. Fitzgerald in the position of having independent means, with no occupation——"

"I? Was it you or I who proposed that?" said the young lady, with some warmth.

"Wait a moment, I see your scheme. You don't impose upon me, miss. Here you have a young man who is quick, intelligent, of a generous disposition; and of course, when he has a fair allowance of money, and absolutely nothing to do, isn't he the very person—even supposing that he is not allowed to sell Boat of Garry—to be carried off and added to your Whitechapel gang? Oh, I see the whole thing clearly enough; though my eyes are not as good as they once were. Here you have a clever young man for your lectures; and Whitechapel swallows him up; no one ever sees him again; literature loses him; and Boat of Garry is left empty and useless. So that is why we go and run a valuable steam-yacht on to a rock; and that is why we talk for five hours; and no doubt Whitechapel looks rather a pretty sort of place—in a distant way—when you have a smooth blue sea and picturesque mountains round you?"

The young lady flushed slightly; but she retained her accustomed good humour.

"You are quite mistaken, auntie," said she; but now she spoke in a lower tone, for Fitzgerald was standing on the lawn outside, putting the pieces of his rod together. "Mr. Fitzgerald has his own plans. He is not likely to be led by either you or me. If either, it would be you, naturally; for he is greatly indebted to you; whereas he and I are practically strangers. And I know he is anxious to acquire a position in literature; and I should not wonder if, when this book of his comes to be published, it were to make him quite famous. No, auntie," she continued, in a lighter way, for Fitzgerald had started off, "I know what will happen. Your kindness will enable Mr. Fitzgerald to write just in the way that suits his own bent; he will be under no anxiety except to do his best work; and, of course, he will be grateful to you; and you will be able to produce him at your dinner-table as your

own author. Think of that! You will have him all to yourself; you alone will know what he is working at; a real, live, distinguished author constantly on the premises. For no doubt you will ask him to come and live in Hyde Park Gardens; and then you can get a study for him by turning me and my nine-inch telescope out-of-doors. Then his lordship, when he pleases, will come over here to shoot wild-duck; and perhaps, auntie dear, you won't mind sending me a brace now and again to my lodgings in the Mile End Road, where I shall most likely be starving, after having sold my telescope and my last pair of boots."

"Go away and tell them to bring tea," said her aunt, sharply; and so this discussion came to an end.

Meanwhile the object of all this diverse speculation was making his way down through the meadows to the stream, his long rod swaying over his shoulder. There was a contented look on his face on this warm and pleasant afternoon. The neighbourhood of Boat of Garry seemed much more cheerful since the arrival of these visitors. And yet he was not paying much attention to the things around him; rather he was amusing himself by drawing an imaginary picture of what his life would have been had he been content to accept Mrs. Chetwynd's munificent offer in its simplicity. He was thinking of himself as owner of Boat of Garry: living a quiet, solitary, resigned life; taking what care of the place he could, no matter into whose hands it was destined ultimately to fall; perhaps, through industrious stewardship, being able to save something to send to Miss Chetwynd's charities; and then from time to time, in this peaceful and uneventful existence, jotting down the impressions of these silent hours, and so maintaining a sort of relationship with the unknown friends over there in England whom he should never see. He looked ahead, and beheld himself as another person. A sensation of being middle-aged came over him. It was in that character, indeed, that he had written the "Occupations of a Recluse." There was a tone in them as of the thinking of one for whom the eager interests of life were over. He had arrived at the stage of contemplation; the phenomena of the earth around him were not of much

importance, except in so far as they suggested strange fancies, or became the secret friends and confidants of his solitary walks by sea and shore.

He was amusing himself with this fancy of what his life might be. There was the possibility offered him. There was no need for him to hand over Boat of Garry to Miss Chetwynd's charities; more than that, it was extremely doubtful whether Mrs. Chetwynd would allow him. Indeed, so busy was he with this dream of the future that when he sat down on a low boundary-wall, and placed his rod beside him against the stones, and took out his fly-book, he kept mechanically turning over the leaves and straightening here and there a bit of feather or fur, and did not hear the footsteps behind him.

It was the boy that helped Murtough in the stables; and he brought two letters. He glanced at the basket; but did not venture to ask his honour whether he had caught anything; then he reluctantly left.

These two letters made Fitzgerald's heart beat, and caused his imagination to be fired with far other dreams than that of spending an idle contemplative life out of the world. The first was from the publisher who had already proposed to issue the "Occupations" in a volume; and who now put his offer in definite terms: a considerable sum—a sum that Fitzgerald had not dreamed of—to be paid down; with a royalty on each copy after a certain number had been sold. If Mr. Fitzgerald agreed, would he proceed with the revision of the papers forthwith? And did he happen to know of some capable artist who, in his opinion, would be a fit person to illustrate the book?

"I think John Ross and I will have a little talk about this," he said to himself.

But it was the second letter that he read and re-read with far greater gratification. That was about money; this was a personal triumph. It ran as follows:—

"Sloane Street, Wednesday.

"MY DEAR SIR—You may remember that I had the pleasure of meeting you one evening at Mr. Hilton Clarke's, when Mr. Scobell, who has obligingly given me your address,

was also present. I had heard a rumour to the effect that the papers "The Occupations of a Recluse" were by a Mr. Fitzgerald; but I did not identify the name with yourself until I accidentally met Mr. Scobell, who put me right. It has since occurred to me that you might find greater freedom as to choice of subject in the columns of a weekly paper; although I must confess that Noel appears to have given you a very wide discretion. His boldness has been justified; the papers are well spoken of; they are unusual; they have the touch of a new hand. Of course I do not say, Leave the *Mirror* and come to the *Liberal Review;* I do not consider that fair journalism; but many of the writers on the daily papers also contribute to the weeklies; and I merely say that if you happen to have an occasional article (you might find yourself, for example, with a subject which would be somewhat too subtle and out-of-the-way for the hurry of daily newspaper reading) that you chose to send to us, I should be glad to have it; and as we have two rates of payment for different kinds of matter, I should be happy to put you on the most favoured nation scale.

"Yours faithfully,

"G. GIFFORD."

"To William Fitzgerald, Esq.,
"Boat of Garry, by Bantry, Ireland."

His first, quick, proud thought was that he would walk straight to the house and show this letter to Mary Chetwynd.

But why to her? She did not know the story. There was no one now who knew the story; and his triumph was useless.

He regarded these letters. There could be no doubt that they shadowed forth prospects that ought to have been alluring enough to a young man of literary tendencies and aspirations. Indeed, as he looked at them, and guessed at all they hinted at, that career seemed to him a more noble and useful one than hiding himself away from the world in this solitary place and avoiding the cares and anxieties and victories of life altogether. And so he was

to become an author at last—perhaps even one who might win in some small measure the affection of the great many-eyed, many-hearted, and not ungrateful public? And to write for the *Liberal Review*—that seemed almost as great a wonder: not standing, as of old, at the foot of the little stair, and anxiously awaiting the fate of a timid essay about some one else's work; but allowed to mount into his own small pulpit, as it were, and deliver forth his own utterances, if haply one here or there cared to listen to a whisper from the hills or a murmur from the wide seas amid the jangle of political life. It seemed a wonderful thing. He could scarcely rest. He wanted to be away and begin at once. The great world was calling him from these still solitudes; the picture was opening out before him; to what possible goal might he not attain?

And then somehow—as a sudden sob breaks the silence of the night, and the hushed and hidden grief reveals itself, and all the darkness is shuddering with the old and ceaseless pain—just as quickly and terribly flashed across his consciousness the words "Too late—too late!" The time for these brave dreams was over now. A man does not strive but towards an end; does not fight without hope of reward; does not strike for a great future if it is for himself alone. "Too late—too late!" And he had pretty well schooled himself by this time; and knew when it was time to give up thinking; and was as well aware as any one of the stupidity of idle regret. So he deliberately and calmly put in his pocket the letters; and chose, with patient care, the flies he wanted; and went down among the tall weeds by the side of the river. It was a pleasant afternoon; the water was in good condition; he must not return to the house without a sea-trout for dinner.

For a long time he had exceeding bad luck. The stream abounded with small river-trout, that would keep playing with the big sea-trout flies, occasionally suffering for their folly by finding themselves twitched into the air and then floundering on the grass. This necessitated his fixing the rod upright and going and getting the diminutive beast off the hook, while there was every probability that in flopping about it had caught one of the other flies in the

weeds. And then again he had to be careful about restoring the captive to its native element, for the flash and shoot of it might alarm some more noble fish. But he worked away, whipping industriously and mechanically, not thinking of anything in particular except as to how to get the flies lightly on the water, himself unseen, and how to recover them without catching up on the bank.

At last there was a sudden "flop!" that well he knew the sound of; but he struck too quickly or too sharply. Again and again he dexterously dropped the flies over the same bit of water; but there was no response; perhaps the fish had been touched and had learnt caution. He was beginning to think that he must return to the house empty-handed, when, lower down, there was another "flop!" instantly followed by a sharp whirr of the reel; then again by a deliberate "sulk," during which time he rapidly got in his line again, keeping on all the strain he dared. He was now in an excellent position, for the fish had taken refuge in a narrow deep little pool beyond some gravelly shallows, and as it was at a bend in the river, he, standing on the neck of land, could have fair command of the fish whichever way he went. However, he now knew pretty well how many and how various were the accidents possible on this little stream, where there was no chance for that fine, leisurely playing of the fish that can be indulged in on an open loch with impunity; and so he kept on the full strain of his tackle, ready for whatever might happen.

He had very little trouble, however. The fish made one long rush up stream; but fortunately kept almost in mid-channel. Then it leaped out of the water twice; but without doing damage. Then it sulked again; but it was evidently growing weaker. Finally, after one or two slow, quiet sailings up and down, it allowed itself to be gently guided into the side, where a cautious and then quick swoop of the landing-net speedily deposited it on the grass—a beauty of a sea-trout of apparently about three pounds weight.

Well, he thought that was quite enough, seeing it was getting near dinner-time; and Mrs. Chetwynd could not

bear unpunctuality; while, of course, he had to exchange his jacket and knickerbockers for a more suitable costume. So he popped the fish in the basket; and was striding home through the meadows that led up to the house, when he saw Miss Chetwynd coming to him through the trees. She had evidently been expecting him.

"Have you caught anything?" she said pleasantly.

"A fairish sea-trout," he said, "about three pounds. I am afraid it won't be in time for dinner."

"It won't," she said. "It is near dinner-time now. Mr. Fitzgerald," she added, "I wanted to say a word to you, before going in. You hinted something about handing over Boat of Garry to me, to help these various things of mine. It was kind of you. But please don't even mention such a project to auntie. She will not hear of it; when I spoke of it she was very nearly being angry in earnest; and that does not often happen. No; you must take Boat of Garry, and keep to her wishes; you will find them considerate and reasonable enough."

"But what kind of use could I put it to?" said he, rather bewildered at the moment.

They had reached the corner of the avenue, and the house was visible. She regarded him for a second.

"That is hardly for me to say," she said slowly. "But I think if you were to take Boat of Garry, as my aunt wishes to give it to you, you would be in a position in which you could do a great deal of good to many, many people."

He could not stay to ask her to explain, even if she were willing to explain; for he had but little time in which to get ready for dinner. During that brief operation, however, some odd fancies occurred to him. If certain things were now no longer possible to him in the world, might not others be? Was it so necessary to human happiness that life should be crowned by either love or ambition? Look at Mary Chetwynd, now. Her life seemed valuable enough to her, because she could make it valuable to others; it was a beautiful life in its sweet serenity, its cheerfulness, its atmosphere of frankness and kindness and content. Her philosophy was perhaps not very profound; but at least it was practical: "We enjoy such things as we

have through the best people having done their best; let us try and do the same; and make the lives of those who have been borne down in the struggle a little more tolerable." It was impossible to imagine a happier human being than she seemed to be; fitting accurately and easily into her surroundings; full of cares that were scarcely anxieties; satisfied with her place in the world; a dispenser of light. It seemed strange for this King's daughter to spend the best part of her life in Whitechapel; but perhaps she could not be just quite what she was if she did otherwise? At all events, she had found out something. That perfect serenity of content could not be the fruit merely of nature and disposition; it must be the outcome of nature and disposition finding fitting work and occupation. And if a woman's instinct had found out a way of living which seemed to make the world around her (in the eyes of all beholders) more sweet and cheerful and wholesome, might it not be worth while enquiring what that was?

Now, no sooner had they sat down to dinner than the old lady, with a trifle of enforced gaiety to hide a certain nervousness, began to unfold to him her designs.

"Mary and I have been having a dreadful quarrel about you," she said.

"I am sorry for that," was his answer. "But it does not appear as if much harm had been done."

"You must know that Mary and I have been sketching out a career for you—only with a difference—and drawing out plans. Of course the time is very appropriate; for one might almost regard you as making a new start in life——"

"I?" said he, in great alarm. Had she guessed then of that mortal crisis through which he had come, when the value seemed to go out of life altogether, and death to take its place as the more desirable thing?

"Yes; with all the people talking about the new writer. Of course you will be quite a different person when you return to London. Do you think, when you become great and famous, that we shall expect you to come and read accounts of murders to a poor old blind woman?"

"Indeed I am not likely to become great and famous,"

he said, honestly enough. "But I should like to earn my living by literature. And I think I might be able to do that; I have just had two letters that give me good hope. But do you think that is any reason why I should prove myself ungrateful for all your kindness? I may be able to earn my living at literature, as I say; and then I would not ask you for the salary you have been kind enough to give me—you might hand it over to Miss Chetwynd for her charities; but that need not prevent my coming to read to you each afternoon, just as before, if you will allow me. For I know," he added, more lightly, "precisely what you like in the way of literature and news; and I would not hand you over to your niece again, who would make you believe that the magazines and newspapers contained nothing but reports of Sanitary Commissions and things like that——"

"Now I call that too bad," said Mary Chetwynd. "I read to auntie for years, and never got 'Thank you;' you read for a few months, and she gives you Boat of Garry! And then to have insult heaped upon me as well——"

"But, Mr. Fitzgerald," interrupted Mrs. Chetwynd, with some little agitation, "you speak of handing over something to Mary's charities. And Mary said you had made some suggestion. Now you must understand this—do not think I am unreasonable—but you must really understand that any proposal of that kind with regard to Boat of Garry is out of the question. I will give you the place. I will give you enough to keep it up; and a surplus for your own expenses. But either let or sold or mortgaged Boat of Garry shall not be."

"But, auntie dear," said Mary Chetwynd, in her soft persuasive voice, "Mr. Fitzgerald understands that. I told him. It was only a chance suggestion of his—generous but impracticable. You need not worry yourself about it, more especially as you can easily put it out of the power of any one to sell the place. Only I would not have you make any one a present with any doubt remaining in your mind. Mr. Fitzgerald won't sell Boat of Garry."

"If it were handed over to me like that," said he, simply enough, "surely I could not do less than consider I held

it on trust? It should be done with entirely and merely as you wished."

"I would rather make it binding on your honour than leave it to the lawyers," said she, in a calmer way. "And what I should like would be to have the place kept exactly as it is; and to be well looked after; so that, if you should at any time think of asking us to come and look at it, it would be really coming to the old place again, and seeing it just as it was when—when my poor boy was so proud of it. For why should you not be proud of it too? It is a pretty place——"

"Mrs. Chetwynd," said he, "you speak as if something were needed to make your splendid offer acceptable to me. I don't think you can understand what it is to a young fellow of my age to be made independent—for that is what it would come to; to have his place in the world made sure for him; and that place a most attractive one. I have been near starvation once or twice—and not so long ago. And now you offer me an assured income; and all kinds of luxuries; and yet you imagine that I don't quite appreciate your kindness, or might be so ungrateful as to do with the property something not according to your wishes. I don't think you need have much fear."

"I will trust to your honour, and not to the lawyers," she said. "I will make no conditions when the transference is drawn out. I won't ask you to take our name, as I had thought of doing; it will be enough if you do what I want with the place. And if the money is not enough, there will be more. But about the name; I will ask you to let me call you Willie, when you come to see us in London—if you do not mind."

"Oh no—it is only another part of your kindness."

"It is a bargain, then?"

"If you wish it to be, Mrs. Chetwynd," he was saying, rather doubtfully, for he was wondering whether she would always approve of what she had done, and perhaps was thinking of asking her to take time to reflect. But he caught the look of Mary Chetwynd's face. There was a touch of surprise there—almost of reproach. She seemed to say, "Why do you hesitate? Is that the way to accept

such a gift?" So he only said: "If I only knew how to thank you?"

"Never mind that," said the old lady, good-naturedly. "It is a bargain, then? Shake hands on it!"

So he rose and went round, and they shook hands to seal the covenant, as it were; and then he kissed her hand in mute token of gratitude, and went back to his seat. The ceremony was a brief one; but after that she never expressed any anxiety as to what might become of Boat of Garry.

"And now about yourself——" She hesitated for a second, and flushed a little. Evidently she had tried to call him "Willie," and had failed. "Tell me what your plans are. Mary says you would like to go back to London."

"I was thinking I should like to get back for a short time; but it is of little consequence; I will remain here if you prefer it."

"Oh, but that won't do at all. I did not buy you into slavery like that. The landlord of Boat of Garry must do as he pleases. You shall go back to London to-morrow if you wish."

"I could not do that either," said he, with a smile. "For I was thinking, if you did not object, I would ask my artist friend, John Ross, to come over here and make some sketches. They talk of putting illustrations into the volume they are going to publish for me; and if Mr. Ross were to come to Boat of Garry—I mean, if you didn't mind it—I could show him where to make his sketches, and I suppose they could transform them into woodcuts."

"Bless the boy," the old lady said, with her pretty laugh. "Is he asking for permission to invite a man to come to his own house?"

"He is rather a wild sort of colt, and not easily led," Fitzgerald said, doubtfully.

"For my part," said Mary Chetwynd, who had not spoken for some time, "whoever goes back, I must, very soon."

"Mary, there is not a soul in London!" her aunt exclaimed.

"Is there not, auntie? I can assure you that my friends

about the Mile End Road don't go to Biarritz or Mentone —not as a rule."

"Why, now, I wanted Mr. Fitzgerald to go back with us—after a little while—just to have everything put straight——"

"Oh, I don't mind waiting here for a little while yet," Mary Chetwynd said, at once. "I think I have earned a little longer holiday; and as for you, auntie, as you are a good-for-nothing, it does not matter where you are."

"And I thought we might make the homeward journey in part a driving excursion—going round by way of Killarney. Wouldn't that be charming?"

"Killarney?" said Fitzgerald, with a quick catching of the breath. And he could only add: "Oh, do you think so?"

"Don't you?" she said, regarding him with astonishment. "Have you, an Irishman, anything to say against Killarney?"

"Oh no," he said, rather under his breath. And then he stammered "—No doubt Killarney is very pretty—oh yes, pretty enough. But—but it is scarcely anything more, is it? Perhaps I am not just to it. But I don't care about fresh-water lakes—the mysterious association of the sea is so wonderful a thing.—Do—do you really think it would be worth while taking all the time to drive round by Killarney?"

"Then what do you say to Inisheen?"

She did not notice that the blood forsook his face for a second. But Mary Chetwynd noticed it, and said quickly—

"Auntie, I declare to you I am not going to waste my time in driving-excursions. These are for idle people. And Dan and Wellington always get fidgety when they are put up in strange stables; do you mean to have our necks broken?"

"My dear, I wanted Mr. Fitzgerald to show us some of the wonderful places he has described——"

"But you can see them all around here," said her niece. "There is far more of Boat of Garry than of Inisheen—if it is Inisheen—in the papers. And what we ought to do is to give all the time we can spare to Mr. Ross, so that

we shall have Boat of Garry glorified, and made as famous as the book is sure to be. So I, for one, vote against both Killarney and Inisheen; those on the other side may hold their right hands—their right hand—up."

"Well, you always have your own way, Mary," her aunt said contentedly.

"And, indeed, auntie, you have not yet asked Mr. Fitzgerald whether he would prefer to go with us or rather choose his own time? It isn't every one who cares to go travelling with women. Now what I consider would be the reasonable and sensible plan would be this——"

"Whatever agrees with your own wishes, Mary, is always the reasonable and sensible plan," said her aunt, with a smile.

"Well, but listen. The opposition can hold up its right hand when the proper time comes. Mr. Fitzgerald ought to go back to London shortly to arrange about his literary affairs there. I must go back; for there are too many of us away at this time of year. Now we will assume that Mr. Fitzgerald will either be, or pretend to be, content to be burdened with us two women—and take our tickets and all the rest of it—and get grumbled at if we lose anything—and so, what I say is, let us have a little longer holiday here, not bothering about any Killarney or Inisheen; then let us all go back to London; then let Mr. Fitzgerald, when his affairs there are put in proper train, come back here, along with Mr. Ross, for the shooting. What a pity it would be to miss the shooting——"

"Well, you are right there, Mary," said the old lady, eagerly; for was she not anxious that Fitzgerald should appreciate all the advantages of the place she had given him?

"And of what use are women in a house at such a time? After a hard day on the hill, the men always go to sleep after dinner. Then, according to my plan, there would be no hurry; and Mr. Ross could do his sketches at his own leisure, and do justice to the scenery; and we should all be very pleased to have such a nice souvenir of the place. For who knows what turn affairs may take; and who knows whether Mr. Fitzgerald may be inclined to ask us ever

again to visit Boat of Garry? I was going to suggest that he might invite us for Christmas; but Christmas is too busy a time with me."

"I was going to say, Mrs. Chetwynd," said Fitzgerald, who had been sitting with his eyes fixed on the table—and he spoke rather slowly and with a trifle of embarrassment—"that if you would prefer driving round by Killarney, I should be most happy to go that way with you; and to Inisheen also, if you wished it."

"Oh, I wash my hands of the whole affair," the cheerful old lady said, "I have nothing to do with it. She arranges everything. Settle it between you. I am nothing but a doll in her hands."

"But then you are such a pretty doll, auntie, dear," her niece said, "and such a gentle and well-behaved doll, I have never the least trouble with you. Now come outside before it gets too dark; and we will have coffee there. All the evening sounds are so soft and quiet just before the night comes on; and you will have a thick shawl wrapped round your head and shoulders, auntie; and we will wait for the new moon; and turn over all the silver in our pockets. Poor old Boat of Garry—it has gone away into the hands of strangers; but we will have one more quiet evening outside the porch, listening to the stream; until the moon comes up behind the acacia, and then it will be time to get in-doors again."

It was a peaceful night—a night to be remembered. To one of them there, it seemed as if some haven might be reached after all,—of content, and affection, and gratitude. The darkness gathered over hill and shore; the moon rose into the clear heavens behind the trembling acacia leaves; the stream murmured down there beyond the lawn; the air was soft from the sea. A gracious night. There was hardly any need for speaking; it was enough to sit and watch the moon slowly rise, and the faint light tell on the grass and the gravel. Then there was a stirring of leaves around, and the air felt colder; it was with something of a sigh that they got up, and took their things with them, and went in-doors; leaving the slumbering world and the scarcely breathing sea to the silence and the stars.

When Fitzgerald went up to his room later on, after having bade them good-night, and also having made another sort of effort to let the old lady know that he was fully sensible of her great generosity towards him, he found a half-sheet of notepaper placed somewhat prominently on the dressing-table; and at the first glance he recognised the clear, pretty handwriting to be that of Mary Chetwynd. There was no message or explanation; only these words—"*I hereby promise to contribute twenty pounds a year to the fund for providing toys for Hospital children.*"

Well, he sat down and contemplated these words, knowing very well what they meant. It was an invitation to him to give to those poor children some small portion of the bounties that had been heaped on him. And the more he thought of it the more he was convinced that it would be a very strange thing if his literary efforts could not produce a yearly sum as great as that, or even considerably greater. As for the monetary arrangements that Mrs. Chetwynd might be disposed to make, he knew nothing about them as yet; but he understood that practically he was to have an income that would render him independent. Surely, then, literature might enable him to do as much as this or more? So he went and got a pen, and scored out the word "*twenty*," and inserted the word "*fifty*," adding his signature in full—*William Fitzgerald.* And then he enclosed this document in an envelope, which he addressed to Miss Chetwynd; thinking he would leave it on the breakfast-table for her in the morning, without another word.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE BOOK.

WELL, in due course of time—that is to say, about the end of October—the original "Occupations of a Recluse," along with numerous additions, and with a series of illustrations taken from sepia drawings by John Ross, were given to the public in book form, and almost instantly commanded a very large sale indeed, and were widely talked of. The publishers happened to be masters of the art of doing a good thing well; and had spared neither trouble nor cost in getting these sepia drawings transformed into a set of admirable woodcuts; while many people who had read the "Occupations" in a fugitive way as they appeared in the *Daily Mirror*, were glad to have them in this permanent form. Moreover, the reviewers received the book favourably, although one or two rather complainingly asked how they could be expected to classify this amorphous hotch-potch of philosophy, poetry, and snipe-shooting, as if there were any necessity that they should classify it at all; while the *Liberal Review* said that, although the writer of these papers was a contributor to their own columns (editors are but human, and cannot avoid these little touches), they did not see that was any reason why they should not praise good work when they found it. And when the *Liberal Review* people set about praising a book, they do it.

In the circumstances it was not likely that Mr. Scobell should miss his opportunity; and forthwith he made his way down to the Fulham Road. Fitzgerald still occupied the long low-roofed room there, for the sake of auld lang syne;

but now there was a heavy *portière* shutting off the bedroom end; and there were some comfortable chairs, and more cheerful-looking rugs; while over the fireplace stood two brilliant Chanak-Kalesi jugs that Miss Chetwynd had given him, and that were the sole ornament of the room. Mrs. Chetwynd, indeed, had begged of him to take some better rooms in one of the streets leading from Piccadilly; but he asked to be excused; for he had no mind to spend much money on himself. In fact, he was living pretty much in his old way; although, on one occasion, when both aunt and niece went down to his humble lodging, to have afternoon tea, he went to the extravagance, beforehand, of purchasing a modern Japanese tea-set and a few pots of flowers. It was then that Miss Chetwynd said the room looked far too bare, and promised him the two green and scarlet jugs.

"My dear f'lah," said Mr. Scobell, laying his hat and cane on the table, and taking off his yellow gloves, "let me congratulate you! You have done it at a bound—at a bound. It is the only book talked of at every dinner-table you go to. By Jove, sir, when I told them last night at Lady Lampley's that I knew every inch of your career, I found everybody listening. And I knew it; I predicted it; I said so to Gifford. I said to him when I met him, 'Gifford, my dear f'lah, you don't know what people are talking about; you are in your own set. You keep among a literary set; and don't know what society is talking about; why don't you get Fitzgerald to write for you; why should he write only for the *Mirror*—a trades'-union, Methodistical, Republican rag like that?' Not that I approve of the politics of the *Liberal Review* either; you can't expect me; but what I say is that the *Liberal Review* is a gentlemanly sort of paper after all; you see it in good houses; when I go into my club I find it lying about."

All this while he was looking around.

"My dear f'lah, this won't do at all. When a penniless, supercilious good-for-nothing like that fellow Hilton Clarke sticks himself up in the Albany——"

"Poor chap, he is no longer in the Albany."

"—I say, why should you be living in a bunk like this?

Damme, sir, you should have rooms in Curzon Street, and a private hansom, and a hack for the Park! I am told that Mrs. Chetwynd makes you a very handsome allowance."

"She does. But, you know, literature is best cultivated on a little oatmeal. And I find enough to do with my spare cash in another way."

"Oh, but my dear Fitzgerald," said Mr. Scobell, with a lofty smile, "you are throwing away your chances! You might go everywhere—you might go to the very best houses. I'll tell you what, now—my wife shall send you a card for one of her At Homes; and you ought really to come, don't you know; you'll meet some of the very best people, I give you my word. What's more; I want you, like a good f'lah, to give me a night for a little dinner at my club. It isn't a big club, it isn't one of the big swell clubs, isn't the Abercorn, but you'll meet a very good class of men there, I can tell you. And I'll ask old Gifford, if you like; and anybody else you like, and we'll have a little bit of a celebration, don't you know; for I tell you what it is, Fitzgerald, old f'lah, I feel as if I had had a finger in the pie, don't you know, and—and damme if I'm not proud of it; and precious glad that you've made such a hit!"

There was really some frank good-nature mixed up with the man's vanity. He took out his note-book.

"What night shall it be?" he said. "Let it be a Saturday, the 15th or the 22d, and we'll have a house-dinner; and you'll see if the Abercorn can't give you as good a dinner and as good a glass of wine as any club in London."

"Either night you like, then."

"We'll say the 22d to give more time. What I say is, do a thing well. A man has no right to ask me to dine at his club, and give me the sort of dinner you'd get at a d—d common restaurant. When I ask a man to my club I want him to have the best that's in the kitchen and the cellar; and I'm not above taking trouble about it. What I say is, do the thing well. There's a lot of people, don't you know, nowadays who pretend to be above all that; being particular about good dinners and good wines and

good cigars is beneath their high mightinesses' notice; they pretend they prefer water to a claret that cost you a hundred shillings a dozen. Rubbish—all rubbish. What I say is, the good things of this life wouldn't be there if they weren't to be used; and I suppose Providence knows as much about what's good for you as any of the scientific swells. There's a good deal of that sort of nonsense goes on at the Chetwynds'; but the Chetwynds are not in fault. Upon my soul, I don't think it's respectful to your hostess to nibble a bit of bread and a cutlet, and drink a glass of water, and call that your dinner; I don't think it's nice; I call it bad form, I do; if any fellow did that at my table, I'm hanged if he'd find himself there again. The 22d, seven forty-five, good."

This was the true object of his visit; and he clasped his note-book together again with a satisfied air. Then he took up his hat and gloves.

"You made a suggestion—you were kind enough——" said Fitzgerald, timidly; and then he frankly said—"I wish you would ask my friend Ross, too, who made the sketches, you know."

"Delighted! My dear f'lah, a thousand thanks for the hint. Delighted!"

He took out his note-book again.

"Give me his address; and I will write to him at once. Delighted, I assure you. A deuced clever fellow that; the landscapes Mrs. Chetwynd has of his are excellent—I call them first-rate."

"But he lives just below," Fitzgerald said, looking at his watch. "And he will probably be at work now. Will you go down and see him?"

"By all means."

They went down the stairs and knocked at the door of the studio, and were admitted, apologising for their intrusion.

"Not a bit," said John Ross, who had his pipe in his fingers. "Come in. I was painting the portrait of the collie there; and he's not a good sitter; he was continually falling asleep; and I got tired o' whistling the poor creature awake; and was having a glint at the newspaper."

Mr. Scobell looked strangely around at the big, gaunt, dusty studio. And then, with much roundabout phraseology and compliment, he explained the object of his visit; Ross's reply being briefly—

"Yes, I will."

But Mr. Scobell did not stop there. He began to make a round of the studio; and to offer remarks; while John Ross became a trifle peevish.

"Now I'll tell you what I'll do, Mr. Ross," said he, in his grand manner. "I don't see that an artist who can paint like that should not be known. I'll tell you what I'll do; I'll ask Sydenham to come to this very dinner."

Mr. Sydenham was a very distinguished painter and Academician; the husband, indeed, of the lady whom Fitzgerald had on one occasion taken down to supper, and who had politely declined to be bribed by sandwiches.

"Sydenham's a good fellow, a deuced good fellow; and a word from him would do you no harm. Now that is a mistake of so many of you artists and authors, don't you know; you keep hidden away among yourselves; and you don't go about, and get to know the people you ought to know. I daresay, now, you never met an Academician in your life?"

"The Academy and I are no likely to become great friends," said Ross, drily. "I am a heretic. I will not conform. I like to paint in my own fashion; and they let me; and they go their way, and I go mine; and there is no quarrel between us. Indeed I am not sure but that they try to do me a favour when they put anything I send them near the roof—the effect of distance, you see, may soften the things down a bit——"

"But you don't mean to say, now," remarked Mr. Scobell, coming to a dead pause before a rough sketch that was propped up on the mantelpiece—a very rough sketch, indeed, of a farmyard, with one or two cattle and a heap of straw warm in sunlight, "that they would not give a good place to a picture like that? Now I call that uncommonly good. I have seen a good many pictures in my time. I have been to half the galleries in Europe—and precious sick of them I got sometimes, I can tell you.

I don't profess to be a judge; but I know a good picture when I see it; and I say that calf is as well painted a calf as anybody could want. Rough," said he waving his hand slightly, "a little rough. Wanting in finish, don't you know. But a first-rate sketch; what I call an uncommon good sketch. I should not mind having that hung up in my hall. But the gable of the house is a *leetle* tumble-over, isn't it?—I would suggest——"

He took the canvas down, and held it out at arm's length, examining it critically.

"It is nothing—it is a daub," said John Ross, rather impatiently, and he got the canvas out of his hands and put it up again, with its face to the wall.

But Mr. Scobell resumed possession of it; and again held it out at arm's length.

"No, no," he said patronisingly, "it has merit. It is well balanced. I call the light and shade of that sketch very well balanced, indeed. And I am not afraid to trust my own judgment. I never give an opinion without being ready to back it with money. My notion is that a man should buy pictures that please himself; why should he care what other people think? No, what I say is that's a very good sketch; an uncommon good sketch it is; very well balanced light and shadow; and the long and the short of it is, Mr.—Mr. Ross—that I will buy it. I should not be at all ashamed to have that sketch hung up in my hall——"

But now the red-bearded artist became very angry; and got hold of the unlucky sketch; and sent it spinning to the end of the studio, where it unhappily hit the sleeping collie, that forthwith sprang up with a howl, and slunk into a farther corner, with its tail between its legs.

"I would not have such a thing go out of the place," said he, briefly.

But he soon recovered his temper; and when at last Mr. Scobell, after much more encouraging and soothing advice and criticism, had left, all that John Ross said to his friend about the visitor was merely—

"Man, he's a bletherer, that one."

They went to the dinner, however, at the Abercorn Club;

and a very sumptuous affair it was. They had the Strangers' Dining-room to themselves; and it was brilliantly lit; and the table was magnificently decorated with flowers. Of the gentlemen present Fitzgerald only knew his host, his companion Ross, Mr. Gifford, and, by sight, Mr. Sydenham, but he was introduced to the others by Mr. Scobell, with a series of pompous little compliments, the ordeal not being the less severe that these portly middle-aged persons regarded him with such a silent, blank, lack-lustre-eyed scrutiny that he was on the point of saying, "Upon my soul I don't bite." He wondered what manner of men these were; and the mystery was not rendered less inscrutable when, after they had sat down, Mr. Scobell remarked to him in an undertone—

"There's seven millions at this table."

According to Fitzgerald's way of counting there were only ten persons; so he was more hopelessly in a fog than ever.

"Seven millions, if there's a farthing," continued Mr. Scobell, in the same low tone. "And as you and your friend Ross and Sydenham and I have little enough, you may imagine what the other six have amongst them. The man opposite me and his right hand neighbour are Directors of the Bank of England."

Then Fitzgerald began to see. No wonder these gentlemen were grave if they had the responsibility of owning seven millions of money weighing on them; and there was a business-like seriousness in the way they attacked their dinner, not turning aside for frivolous pleasantries, but keeping a sharp eye on the successive dishes. In course of time, however, the severity of their demeanour abated; the staccato remarks about the probability of another European war, which hitherto had represented their conversation, developed into an unanimous abuse of the foreign policy of the then French Government; and then again one funny man, at the end of the table, would succeed in getting his next neighbour to laugh (when not too busy). John Ross and the great Academician appeared to have become friends at once, and were talking in an animated fashion; Mr. Gifford was rather in an absent

frame of mind; while Scobell, at the head of the table, beamed and shone upon his guests in silence.

"Well, Fitzgerald," said Mr. Gifford, at length, "since we last dined together, one of the little group has rather dropped under."

"Do you know anything about him? Do you know where he is?" said his neighbour, knowing well whom he meant.

"In Paris. Not very well off, I fear. They say he is going to marry Lady Ipswich after the *decree nisi* is made absolute; and I believe her friends have made some small provision for her; but Clarke had always expensive habits, and I am afraid he is a little given to borrowing. But they have a pretty house, I am told, just outside the Marble Arch."

"The *Arc de Triomphe*," his neighbour suggested.

"Well, yes: what did I say? I hope his book will be successful; but the subject has so little interest for the general public——"

"His book? What book?"

"It came to the office the day before yesterday, I think. *The Laws and Limitations of Art* it is called——"

"Oh, I wish you would let me review it!" Fitzgerald exclaimed, with an eagerness that made his companion regard him with a quick look.

"No," said Mr. Gifford, with an odd kind of smile; "we could not have one of our own reviewers abused in our own reviewing columns."

"Your columns?" said Fitzgerald in bewilderment. "Does Hilton Clarke write for you?"

"Sometimes," was the answer. "The *Weekly Gazette* got tired of him long ago; and he appealed to me. There are one or two things he can do very well. I am sorry for the fellow. I hope his book will be successful; but I doubt it."

"Why won't you let me review it, then?" said Fitzgerald, who was on pretty familiar terms with the editor.

"You had some squabble with him, hadn't you, about the *Household Magazine?*" said Mr. Gifford, with his piercing eyes regarding him. "I gathered from Scobell

that he had treated you rather badly. Well, that is nothing new; but still——"

"Oh, if you mean that," Fitzgerald said hastily, "you are quite mistaken. It is quite the other way. I meant to say everything I could for the book. He did owe me some money; but then, on the other hand, I owe him something. But for him I daresay I should at this moment be the sub-editor of the *Cork Chronicle*. I should like to praise the book."

"That is quite as bad a temper," said Mr. Gifford. "We will get some more impartial person—but some friendly person, I hope. And why should you want to write reviews? Scobell tells me you are now the owner of an estate in Ireland; and have a handsome income besides."

"I want to make all the money I can," Fitzgerald said, "for I know plenty of uses for it. And as for the Irish estate, I consider myself only the steward of it; though I get shooting and fishing for nothing; and also the most delightful quiet when there is a chance of running over. Ask your neighbour—oh, let me introduce you: Mr. Ross, Mr. Gifford—ask him—he is an artist—what he thinks of Boat of Garry."

Mr. Gifford thereupon turned to John Ross, and Fitzgerald was left unoccupied, whereupon Mr. Scobell, who had overheard some chance phrase, said—

"I say, my dear f'lah, what did you mean by that dedication?[1] Upon my life, I don't know whether the dear old lady was more pleased by it or more indignant. She did not speak to you about it, perhaps?"

"Yes, she did. She thanked me; that was all. What was there to be indignant about?"

"'My dear Mr. Scobell,' she said to me—you see,

[1] This was the dedication in question, prefixed to the little volume:

To my friend and benefactress,
MRS. ALGERNON CHETWYND,
of Hyde Park Gardens, and Boat of Garry, Ireland,
This collection of idle papers
is most respectfully dedicated.

Fitzgerald, I have known the Chetwynds for many years; they have always been in our set. 'My dear Mr. Scobell,' she said, 'what does the lad mean by describing me as of Boat of Garry? Won't he take it when I give it to him? He wanted to give it to Mary, to squander away; and now he wants to saddle me with it. Can't I get rid of it anyhow?'"

"Oh, but that is all right," said Fitzgerald. "That is quite settled and understood. Mrs. Chetwynd and I understand the position perfectly; and so also does M— Miss Chetwynd."

So the banquet went on; the talk becoming generally louder; with gushes of laughter here or there; and perhaps nothing occurred particularly deserving of mention except that one tall and portly gentleman, of a most severe and repellent countenance, who had been boring everybody to death about his travels in Armenia, was heard to remark, in the most innocent manner, of a well-known statesman whom they were discussing, "Well, all I can say is that he is a man of very strange fancies, very strange fancies indeed. He took a most unaccountable dislike to myself. A most singular thing. Yes, and he showed it too—damme, he showed it;" and also that Master Willie, by a base and unworthy subterfuge, obtained a triumph over his enemy of former days. For he began to talk to Mr. Gifford about familiar quotations; and in the most naïve manner observed that few were better known than

"*De par le Roi, défense à Dieu,*
D'opérer miracle en ce lieu."

The editor fell into the trap headlong.

"*De faire miracle—de faire miracle,* I think," said he, politely.

"*D'opérer,* I think it is," said Fitzgerald, graciously.

"Pardon me, I am sure you are wrong. It is a most familiar quotation. *De faire miracle en ce lieu.*"

"I would not contradict you; for, as you say, the couplet is so well known."

"Oh, there is not a doubt of it—not a doubt of

it. Every schoolboy knows it. *De faire miracle*, of course."

"My authority for *d'opérer*," continued his foe, in an absent and indifferent kind of way, pretending to be very busy in examining the constituents of a mysterious-looking sweet, "is not very absolute. I found it in the Notes to an old edition I have of Voltaire's *Pucelle*; along with a little history of St. Paris. The date of the edition is 1773; and the couplet is spoken of as being familiar. But perhaps it is a misquotation."

"Perhaps, perhaps," said Mr. Gifford; but he lightly changed the subject and wanted Fitzgerald to tell him how the Game Laws affected the poorer tenantry in the south-west of Ireland. And Fitzgerald imparted to him what information he could on that subject, without recalling to him the fact that they had had a dispute about the same couplet in former days when they did not meet on quite such equal terms.

At last the bounteous feast came to an end; and there was much hand-shaking on the steps of the Abercorn Club. As far as Fitzgerald was concerned, it very soon appeared that this big dinner might, if he chose, be regarded as only the beginning of a quite indefinite series of similar repasts, though perhaps of a more domestic kind, for the little book made its way in a remarkable manner; and probably there was something in its contents that made people curious about the personality of the author; and, no doubt, he might have figured at a great many afternoon teas, and dinner-parties, and midnight receptions. But, as it turned out, he found his life far too full of occupation for anything of the kind. When he dined at all in the evening, he went to, or stayed for, Mrs. Chetwynd's *table d'hôte*; and it is more than probable that he would have earned the contempt of Mr. Scobell by his indifference to the good things of this world, or such of them as appeared on the dinner-table. But it was a fine thing, this constant and busy occupation; this finding that both time and money were inadequate to the calls made upon him. The "old, hysterical mock-disease" got in a manner jostled out of existence; there was no longer any room

for it. That was all left behind now; — except, alas! when the wonder-world of sleep was opened; and again he was walking with Kitty on the sunny Sunday mornings along the hawthorn lanes outside of Cork: or rowing her home in the moonlight, she singing the while, past the silent quays of Inisheen.

CHAPTER XXXI.

IN THE EAST.

It may easily be surmised in what direction Fitzgerald was now spending what time he could spare from his literary labours, and what money he could save from his stewardship, as he considered it, of Boat of Garry. At first he accompanied Miss Chetwynd on one or two of her Eastern expeditions with far more of curiosity and interest than of hope; for it seemed to him, as it probably would to any outsider, that to seek to alleviate the distress and misery of this vast population with any such means as were at their command, was about as sanguine as to try to drain an Irish bog with a sponge. Moreover, it was not very picturesque —as she had forewarned him. Very rarely was the wretchedness tragic; it was merely mean and commonplace; existence in these foul-smelling lanes and desolate grimy squares seemed a lack-lustre kind of thing; occasionally the people were suspicious rather than grateful; and always they misplaced their h's. But by-and-by, as time went on, and as he saw further into the mechanism of the various organisations, he could not help admiring the patient heroism of those voluntary missionaries who, not deterred by the vastness or the difficulties of the task, busily and cheerfully set to work to do what they could; and he began to see the appreciable fruit of their labours, even if it were only a touch of light and colour added here and there to those poor ignoble lives—a flower-box in a window-sill; a drinking-fountain, perhaps; an exhibition of pictures; a bit of green thrown open to the children, with

a swing or two. Then the free libraries, with books, magazines, and newspapers; cool in the summer, and well warmed in the winter, with coffee at a penny a cup; and the lectures and readings and entertainments, now putting some inkling of sanitary requirements into the heads of the grown-up people, again teaching the boys and lads something of the qualities that built up England; and the invaluable district nurses, carrying notions of cleanliness and kindliness into these poor homes; and so forth, and so forth: all this busy, silent, unobtrusive work, not appealing loudly for subscriptions, and not claiming for its authors any title to martyrdom, seemed to him a very noble thing. This sympathy quickly led to practical help. At the outset he rather wished to act merely as assistant and safeguard to the niece of his benefactress; but he soon found there was no need for that. She had no fear; and there was nothing to fear. In another way, however, he was of use to her. Mary Chetwynd was very much at home in dealing with "her poor people" as she called them, directly; and she had an admirable self-possession on the platform, whether she was demonstrating to an assemblage of men and women the awful effects of drinking unfiltered London water, or reciting patriotic poems to an audience of Whitechapel youths; but at the Council board of the Society she was somewhat diffident. It very speedily appeared, however, that, when Mr. Fitzgerald was in course of time elected to this board, the new member held very strong opinions about the rights of minorities—especially when the minority was Mary Chetwynd. Arguments and grumbling were alike thrown away upon him. No, there he was; there he would stay. And at last, upon the burning question of beer, matters came to a final issue.

"Very well," said he, when he and Miss Chetwynd had been entirely outvoted, "we need not quarrel. You may go your way; but you can't hinder me from going mine. As I said, I don't think a glass of ale can do any harm—if not given to the boys; and I don't think it fair to ask these men to come and spend a long evening without giving them that small amount of indulgence. Now I mean to try it——"

There was a kind of murmur of protest at this: was he going to ignore such a solemn thing as a vote?

"But you may have it either of two ways. Either I will resign altogether, and be free to act that way; or I will remain a member of the society, making any entertainments I get up my own affair—at my own expense I mean—so that for them the society will not be responsible. That will take away the reproach of beer from you; it will be my doing alone."

There was a little further grumbling; but the second alternative was eventually chosen. They did not wish to get rid of Fitzgerald altogether; for he was an active sort of fellow; and he had time and money at his disposal; and they had seen how well he got on with the men and boys at these meetings, keeping order in a good-humoured, hectoring way. Besides they had had one or two newspaper squabbles, and he had been found to be an efficient champion in that direction.

But when they got outside Mary Chetwynd said to him, regarding him with eyes that seemed frightened and laughing at the same time—

"Oh, Mr. Fitzgerald, what have you done?"

"Nothing dreadful, I hope," he said, with a smile.

"When you said 'I,' of course you meant 'we'?"

"Well, then?"

"But how do you expect you and me to do all that by ourselves? Think of the expense. Auntie will be furious. She does not mind about me; but she says I am ruining you; and that you are getting no pleasure in life——"

"Didn't I promise to go over to Boat of Garry in July; and you and she, I hope, will come over and stay there too?"

"And I have some remorse also," she continued. "You would never have raised the beer question, if I had not told you about it in Ireland. Then that little —— Theatre costs £8 : 10s. a night, without any beer. If I could pay for everything, I should not mind Or if you would have a hack and ride every day in the Park, as Mr. Scobell suggests, then auntie would be more satisfied, and I should be sure you had some kind of—of——"

"But do I look so unhappy?" he asked, with a laugh. "However, your mention of Mr. Scobell is most opportune. I think I ought to plunder Mr. Scobell——"

"Oh no; after the filters——"

"But he has friends. At a dinner last year he told me six of them then at the table were worth seven millions. Now if we could get Mr. Scobell to squeeze them a little, what would it matter about the —— Theatre costing £8 : 10s. a night?"

"You know best," she said simply; "and I hope we have not undertaken too much."

But indeed—whether he or she knew, or whether both were ignorant—what interested him in that work down there, and what was a constant delight to him, so that the various pursuits or pleasures on which he might have spent the very liberal income he enjoyed were not even to be thought of, was the mere spectacle of herself in her relations with these poor people. The beautiful, quiet serenity of her nature seemed to shine there, amid all that turmoil of want, and care, and ignorance, and crime. Wherever she went peace surrounded her. Sickly and ailing women, inclined to succumb altogether to the hard pressure of fate, drew strength from the self-reliant character of this mere girl, and struggled on anew. Many a one of them told Fitzgerald that none of the district-nurses could bring such cheerfulness into a house as she could. He grew to think of her what they thought of her. He heard their stories of her; he saw her through their eyes—this King's daughter with the outstretched hands, blessing and comforting wherever she went.

"Willie," said Mrs. Chetwynd to him, one evening before the guests arrived for the *table d'hôte*, "why did you not read to me that article in the *Liberal Review* about benevolence—about the reaction of benevolence on one's self—what was it called?—Benevolence as an Investment?"

"I saw the article," said he, evasively.

"Yes; and you wrote it?"

"Why, how should you think that?" said he.

"Because Mrs. Sims was here this afternoon; and she

read it to me; and both of us agreed that you had been describing our Mary."

"I—I hope you don't think there is anything that would annoy—that would be too personal—if Miss Chetwynd were to see it?" he stammered.

"Well," said the bright little old lady, "considering that you give her all the virtues of an angel, with half-a-dozen other womanly ones, I don't think she ought to object. And indeed, you know, although she is my niece, I must admit that the portrait is recognisable."

So the time passed; and Mary Chetwynd was very proud of the success of the new venture that Fitzgerald had started (though whether that success was due to the merits of the lecturer and the efficiency of her stage-manager and bodyguard, or simply to beer, it would be unnecessary to discuss), and there was no great difficulty about funds, after all. Then Fitzgerald and Mrs. Chetwynd and her niece went over to Boat of Garry in the July of that year; and John Ross went with them, being commissioned to reproduce one or two of his sepia sketches in oils; and they had a pleasant stay there until the end of August. Altogether their life, either there or here in London, was an uneventful one, full of cheerful activities and kindlinesses; and there seemed no reason why any one should wish it changed.

But accidents happen. One evening, after they had come back, Miss Chetwynd had arranged to have her following of youths and lads assemble in the little theatre before referred to, to have displayed to them, by means of a series of magic-lantern projections on a large screen, some portraits of great Englishmen, with occasional remarks by herself. Ordinarily, on such occasions, Fitzgerald was there at the marshalling of the lads, ready with a good-natured cuff, to preserve manners if need be; but the truth was that, as long as "the lady" was present, they were very well-behaved indeed. On this evening, however, there was some serious business elsewhere about a poor wretch who had purloined a book from one of the free libraries to buy (as he said) a loaf of bread; and so Fitzgerald did not get along to the theatre until the lecture, or entertainment, or

whatever it might be called, was well on its way. He slipped into a corner of the pit (there were neither stalls, gallery, nor boxes in this little theatre) and sat down.

The lecturess seemed very self-possessed and familiar with her audience; talking to them as she selected this or that slide; and occasionally coming to the footlights to address them directly.

"Now," she said, as she was stooping over the table, to pick out the proper slide, "I suppose some of you read *Jones's Journal?*"

This was a wretched little local print, which did a good deal of mischief down there. Her audience, perhaps thinking that the portrait of the great Mr. Jones was about to appear on the screen, stamped their feet a bit. On that she rose erect, and faced them with some astonishment.

"Oh!" she said, "is that the kind of paper you admire? I hope not. I hope not, indeed! Perhaps some of you think that when Mr. Jones is denouncing the Government, and saying they have done this, that, and the other thing, he could do it better himself? Would you like to see him try? Is he likely to know more about governing a country —is he likely to be more honest—than men who have been educated all their lives for it, many of them very rich men who, if they had chosen, might have spent all their time in amusing themselves with horse-races or yachts, but who, instead, go through an amount of labour and drudgery that the hardest worked among you don't know anything about, only to find themselves called swindlers and pickpockets by gentlemen like Mr. Jones? Well, now, I know something that will enable you to judge of Mr. Jones. I know that he has been twice before the magistrate for drunkenness and was fined each time; and I know there was an execution in his office not very long ago; and I put it to you whether a man who manages his own affairs like that would be likely to be able to manage the affairs of the country?"

This argument, though somewhat crude, and even verging upon libel, was, at all events, easily understood.

"No—no!" was the general response.

"Well, now, I am going to put before you the portrait

of a great Conservative statesman, a most able and distinguished man. Perhaps I am not a Conservative myself; but that is neither here nor there; I want you to believe that the men who govern England on both sides in politics, are trying to do their best; and that the man who tries to stir up people to lawlessness and discontent is doing his worst and making nothing but mischief. Don't you believe that the rich have stolen the money they have; in most cases it has been brought together by their fathers and grandfathers being sober, industrious, and able men; and when these people try to make good laws you ought to be glad of it instead of howling at them as if they were tyrants. It is the interest of everybody to preserve law and order. Why, if it was not for law and order, how could your mothers and sisters go along Whitechapel Road on a Saturday night, looking at the shops, and buying things for the Sunday dinner? It is the law that protects them from being pushed down and their money taken from them. And so far from regarding the police as your natural enemies, or the enemies of anybody, you ought to think of what Stepney or Whitechapel would be without them, and you ought to be precious glad to lend them a helping hand when you see a thief bolting, or when you see a band of roughs coming along the pavement, hustling the women off and annoying peaceable people."

She put the selected slide into the magic-lantern; the man in the "wings" lowered the gas of the footlights, and when the large, visionary, coloured figure of this Conservative statesman appeared on the screen, it was greeted (despite all the tirades of *Jones's Journal*) with a murmur of approval. But just at this moment something else happened. One amongst the audience, whose eyes had wandered away from the large circle of light on the screen, had noticed a flickering of another sort of light along the edge of a portion of the curtain; and thoughtlessly he called out "Fire!" There was an instant of dead silence, every one looking all around; and then, as the red light up there attracted their eyes, there was a universal rush and clamour. Fitzgerald jumped to his feet, and called to them to sit down; but he might as well have called to the sea.

There were no shrieks or screams, for there were no women present; but a wild struggle to reach the doors, and a consequent wedging up of the excited crowd. They could not squeeze through. Then the black mass—or a great portion of it—seemed to turn; frightened faces looked here, there, everywhere; then the stage was charged. Fitzgerald caught the first one that made by him; and jammed him down on to the form.

"Sit down, you fool; there is no danger!"

But he might as well have tried to put his hands on a pack of wolves. They swarmed up and over on the stage; seeing which Fitzgerald leapt up there too; shoved them aside, and made for the spot where Miss Chetwynd was standing, her face somewhat aghast. She was not regarding the flames overhead; she was looking at the rushing crowd that was now hurrying wildly towards the narrow passage leading from behind the stage. He caught her hand—or rather it was her wrist—and held it tight.

"Do not be afraid," said he, glancing up at the smouldering curtain, and then at the disappearing people. "There is no danger. They will all get out."

"I am not afraid, so long as you are by me," she said, in a rather proud kind of way.

He turned and looked at her eyes; and her eyes met his.

"For always, then?"

She did not speak; but she placed her hand over his hand that held her wrist; and so they remained; waiting for the wild surging mass to get free away; while the red light overhead grew more distinct.

It was a strange situation; but he seemed to have no fear. He remembered afterwards that he was trying to calculate how many more seconds it would take for the last of the crowd to get through: also wondering when the firemen would arrive, and whether the theatre had been left altogether without attendants; and at the same time watching quite calmly the progress of the flames. They did not proceed rapidly. It was some little time before the woodwork caught fire anywhere; for at first it slowly blackened and frizzled, as it were; then a pale thin blue fire became

visible here and there along its surface; then a quicker glow of crimson gleamed up.

"Shall we go now?" he said—for the loud cries for Dick, and Harry, and Jack, and Bill had grown fainter and fainter.

"When you please," said she, with firm lips.

There was no trouble or danger about the matter. Just as they were leaving, a loud splash and hissing was heard overhead and a shower of heavy drops of water came over the stage. They made their way along the "wings" and out by the stage door; and found a large crowd assembled in the street, kept back from the fire-engines by the police. In ten or twelve minutes the whole affair was over; and it only remained for Fitzgerald to get hold of the gasman from among the crowd (the rascal had been among the first to bolt) to have the gas turned off, so that there should be no explosion; while, by the light of some candles, and with the aid of a few of the boys, he got the magic-lantern apparatus collected and carried to a four-wheeled cab outside, in which Mary Chetwynd was awaiting him.

When at last they had driven away from the dense crowd that still lingered about the place there was a better chance for speaking; but silence seemed to be enough. At length she said—

"You once offered me Boat of Garry. And now you give your life to me. What next?"

"It will become worth something when you take it," he answered.

CHAPTER XXXII.

IN A GALLERY.

AND now we must let a few years go by, and come to a certain Private View day at the Bolsover Gallery, Hanover Square. This Gallery, which was intended to be an adjunct rather than a rival to the Royal Academy, had been opened for the first time the year before, and had provoked a good deal of animadversion, favourable and otherwise. For while some declared (with more insistence than was at all necessary) that its chief characteristic was an affected imitation of the manner of the early Florentines, but with the beauty and light and gladness of the old painters replaced by a sickly languor and distortion and decay; that the decorative character of the classical designs in no wise served as a cloak for obvious ignorance of anatomy and consequent bad drawing of the human form; and that the landscapes were less remarkable for a reverential study of nature than for an impertinent audacity, there were others who maintained (with a touch of personal injury in the tone of their remonstrances) that this Bolsover Gallery collection was a welcome relief from the inanity of the common run of exhibitions; that at all events it drove people to think; that a seeking after the highest in art, with whatever shortcomings, was better than the complacency of mediocrity; that, in short, anything was desirable that could help to get rid of the simpering curate sort of stuff that had for so long told its commonplace and silly little stories on the walls of British galleries. It needs only be added here that among the most vehement of the admirers of this new

institution was John Ross. Whether dissatisfaction with the Royal Academy's continued neglect of him may have had anything to do with this feeling it is unnecessary to enquire; for human motives are mixed things; but at all events his championship of the new Gallery was so uncompromising that Mrs. Chetwynd, who was always on the look-out to do little kindnesses in this way, contrived a meeting between Sir Cyril Smith, who was the Director of the place, and the Scotch artist, which had, as it turned out, sufficiently important results for one of them.

So on this summer-like day in spring there was a large and fashionable assemblage circulating through the rooms, or congregated in groups here and there, chatting, or regarding their neighbours' costumes, which, among the young maidens at least, tended rather to sadness of hue and quaintness of design. But there was one group there, of which a tall, bright-eyed young lady was a conspicuous member; and certainly her gown, if there was a suggestion of mediævalism about the shape of it, was not lacking in boldness and richness of colour. It was a velvet gown, of the colour of the very darkest sort of wallflower—a deep ruddy purple; and it was trimmed with lace, or what appeared to be lace, of a dusky yellow—not the yellow of primroses, but rather of daffodils. It was more the costume of a young matron than of a girl; but indeed when you looked at this person, it was not her dress that first attracted notice, but the grace and self-possession of her bearing, and the bright, frank laugh of her eyes.

A tall, elderly, handsome man made his way through the crowd to her.

"My dear child," said he, taking her hand, "I have been hunting for you everywhere. I was told you had come. And how well you are looking! And your dress, too—they say it is the prettiest in the room. Very pretty—very pretty!"

"But you need not praise me for it, Sir Cyril," said she, "nor my dressmaker either. My husband chose the colours. Was not that obedient of me? I told him I dressed only to please him; and that he might as well choose what colours he liked best. Was not that sweet of me?"

"Ah," said he, "young wives are always like that, at first——"

"Young wives, indeed! And my boy will be four years old next June!——"

"And your boy will have very little to thank you for, if you go catching another fever, and have to winter in Italy, leaving the poor little fellow at home. Where is your husband?"

"Oh, he's away with John Ross somewhere—fighting, no doubt. They're always fighting now—ever since we came back from Italy——"

"Have you been round the rooms yet?" he asked, glancing at the little group of friends from whom he had slightly separated her. She forthwith introduced him.

"No," she said. "It is a little too bewildering yet—to me at least. All one's friends seem to be here; and it is so difficult to remember all you want to say at the moment that one has no time for the pictures. It is more exciting than sitting on a terrace at Sorrento; or in a verandah at Capri, watching the tourists climbing up the steps on the donkeys. We went to Ischia after you left us. Now don't stop talking to me, Sir Cyril; for you have all your friends to receive——"

"And the whole day to do it in," said he, lightly. "No, but I am coming back to you. You must not go away anywhere for lunch. I will come for you at one. Mind you have got hold of your husband, and Mr. Ross; there is something very nice and quiet prepared in a corner—an invalid's luncheon, you know. Now go and get a seat: don't stand about all day; but indeed I never saw you looking better in my life."

He was going away, when he suddenly turned.

"Bless my soul," he exclaimed. "I was almost forgetting to ask how your aunt is—better, I hope?"

"Oh, I think so. I think she is almost quite better. But she likes perfect rest, and seems disinclined for the trouble of going out; she says she won't go with us to Boat of Garry this year."

"But she is not ailing now?"

"Oh no, scarcely at all; the warm weather suits her,

and all she suffers from now, she says, is an incurable laziness."

"One o'clock, then, mind."

Almost immediately after Fitzgerald came hurrying along.

"Have you heard? Has any one told you?" he said eagerly.

"I have heard nothing in particular," she said, "but why did you put on that shabby old shooting-coat? Every one else has a frock-coat; and gloves. Where are your gloves? This isn't Capri."

"Every one says that Ross's pictures are the feature of the exhibition," he said, in the same rapid way, not in the least minding her remarks about his clothes. "They have given them the place of honour at the head of the next room—all five in a row. Come along and see them. Gifford—" Here he turned to Mr. Gifford, who, with his wife, a tall and stately dame, was now examining some of the pictures close by. "—Gifford, come and see some pictures in the next room. I told you they would make their mark——"

"Your friend Ross's, I suppose?"

"Yes. Come and judge for yourself. Mind you, I mean to praise them, friend or no friend; so if you are afraid of the reputation of the *Liberal Review*, you'll have to get somebody else. Or we will appeal to an impartial authority, if you like."

No doubt Mr. Gifford, as the little party together made their way up to the head of the next room, considered that he himself was quite sufficient of an impartial authority; and, as it turned out, he was much struck by the séries of landscapes. Or rather, there was only one landscape, treated under five different atmospheric conditions. The subject was the stretch of meadow, water, hill, and sky, visible from the window of the dining-room at Boat of Garry; the first showing the calm, clear dawn arising in the east, the world being quite still and silent and lifeless; in the second was all the variety of a windy summer day—masses of white cloud and shadow, the trees blowing, the work in the fields going on, and over at the horizon an ominous rising of purple; then, in number three, a desolation of rain, everything gray and blurred and hopeless;

number four showed the afternoon clearing up somewhat, with a golden mist beginning to tell as the sunlight got through the moisture; and, finally, the peace of a clear moonlight night.

"A most excellent idea!" exclaimed Mr. Gifford, at once. "Why, that is how one becomes familiar with a place! Why has no one done that before? No one wants any more variety than that—indeed, it shows all the more what skill the artist has when he can do without fresh materials. My dear fellow, you may praise those as much as ever you like. They are the best things I have seen in the exhibition yet, except your wife's portrait. Praise them as you like; I shan't interfere with you."

"But, you know," Fitzgerald said, "there will be a scrimmage amongst the critics, just as there was last year. Now don't let the *Liberal Review* in for anything rash. I'll tell you what I'll do; suppose we appeal; suppose we take the opinion of a thoroughly skilled artist?——"

"Not a bit. On that theory you would have me allow poets to review other poets' poems; and novel-writers to review other people's novels; and so on. Would that be fair? We have set our faces against it since ever the *Liberal Review* was started."

"And yet it seems to me the only opinion worth having," Fitzgerald ventured to say, "if you can make sure it is without bias. Who can decide anything about any art who has not shown that he has mastered its technicalities? Surely the valuable opinion is that of a man who knows the art; who is himself a proficient; and who is so far above everybody else that jealousy or envy is out of the question——"

"And do you expect the *Liberal Review* to pay men like that——"

"Oh, I was not talking about writing at all," Fitzgerald said, with a laugh. "I was talking about these pictures. Now I would take the opinion of Sydenham before any other. He is far beyond rivalry; he can paint landscape just as well as portraits, and nobody can come near him in either——"

"He is too good-natured; he finds good in everything,"

Mr. Gifford objected. "I have walked round the Academy with Sydenham. Not a word of objection anywhere; always the best points picked out; the difficulties explained to you; always praise, especially if the picture is by one of the younger men; always encouragement — very good-natured; but not criticism. No; I propose that if there is to be any appeal, it will be to your wife, for she knows the place. Mrs. Fitzgerald, we want your opinion of Mr. Ross's landscapes."

"Oh, don't ask me," said the tall young lady in the wall-flower and daffodil gown; "I want to buy them, and can't afford it."

"Well, that is an honest criticism," Mr. Gifford said. "I think, Fitzgerald, you may let the *Liberal Review* speak well of the Boat of Garry studies. But where is Ross himself?"

"He won't come into this room. He says it is like having himself put into a frame, and people examining him with a microscope."

But now they had to set to work to go through the galleries systematically and seriously, though that was often interrupted by the arrival of a fresh batch of friends who were all of them anxious to see the portrait of Mary Chetwynd (as some of them still called her) which had been painted by Mr. Sydenham, and which was supposed to be the chief ornament of one of the rooms. They were joined by Mr. Ross, moreover, whose remarks, if somewhat disjointed and dogmatic, were generally to the point.

"That fellow?" he said, regarding the work of an artist who had obviously spent an enormous amount of care in constructing an allegory (but the conundrum was difficult of solution until you turned to the title in the catalogue). "That fellow? Look at the thrawn necks; look at the sham sentiment! That fellow? he would get painted tin flowers to put on his mother's grave. There," said he, turning to the full-length portrait of Fitzgerald's wife that hung in the middle of the room. "Look at that now. That is painted by a man who knows that it is his business to paint, and no to bother his head with the twelfth century or the fifteenth century or any other. Long ago he shook off the corpse-cloths; you canna bind

a giant in spider-webs. There's just nothing that man cannot paint: put it before him—a young lady's face, a bit of moorland, a collie dog—no matter what it is—put it before him, and then you find the master-hand getting it on to the canvas with a power and a carelessness that has grown out o' the anxiety and hard work of a lifetime—the details that tell *in*, the details that are of no use *out*. Look at that fan for colour now—the sharp line in the dusk of the dress. Look at the eyes: they're no saying 'What do you think of me? Am I looking my best? Am I standing right?' They're saying 'Here I am. I am in the world as well as you. I could speak to you if I liked.' People think he is careless; I say that he is careless about what is non-essential; but many a hard struggle it took him to find out *that*. Would they like him to labour the thing, so they could count the pins in the pin-cushion?——"

"My dear Mrs. Fitzgerald," said a voice behind them, "I must really beg and entreat of you to come away."

They turned and found before them Mr. Sydenham himself, and also his pretty wife, whom Fitzgerald had in bygone days endeavoured to bribe with sandwiches.

"Is it fair?" said he. "Is it the act of a Christian woman to stand opposite my paint, and show people the difference? And you just back from Italy, too, with the Neapolitan sun on your cheeks?"

"I was listening to a lecture, Mr. Sydenham," said she. "Mr. Ross was delivering a lecture; and you would have been pleased if you had heard."

"Is it to be 'claw me, and I'll claw thee,' then?" said the famous Academician, with a good-natured smile. "There's nothing in these rooms to beat your fine Irish sketches, Mr. Ross."

"It's no a claw I want from ye, sir," said John Ross, grimly. "It's a 'scratch,' when some decent fellow some day puts me up for an Associate. It is what everybody looks for, I suppose; though I jalouse there'll be more gray nor red in my beard by that time."

"You shall have my 'scratch' and welcome; and I hope long before then," said the Academician; and then again he begged Mrs. Fitzgerald to come away from the neigh-

bourhood of her portrait, which she was not loth to do, for she was very hungry, she said, and one o'clock had arrived.

Presently Sir Cyril Smith appeared and carried the party off in a body—John Ross alone seeming shy or reluctant. But he was very soon put into a pleasant humour by his neighbour at table, who happened to be Mrs. Sydenham, who said she imagined he must be the friend on whose behalf Fitzgerald had endeavoured to bribe her with sandwiches.

"That was no use," said he, bluntly.

"No, I should think not," said this pretty woman, with a charming smile. "I should think not indeed. Not sandwiches. At my time of life one knows better than to eat sandwiches——"

"I wasna thinking of that, mum," said Ross, "I was thinking your husband ought not to be bothered with any such things. A man that can paint as he can paint should have nothing in the world to interfere with his time or attention; if he wastes a day, the country loses just so much——"

"Oh, but he takes great interest in the younger men. And I am very glad he thinks so highly of your pictures—it was not to you alone he said that; and—and, of course, you must be proud of the place they have got——"

"Oh ay," he said, "the tod will find a hole somewhere——"

"I beg your pardon?"

But as he did not answer—or did not hear—she went on to say that she understood he was again going to Ireland with the Fitzgeralds; and they were going early this year, were they not?—and had he been allowed to see anything of the volume of poems—or poetical dramas—that Mr. Fitzgerald was understood to have finished in Italy, and that was now on the eve of publication? John Ross answered as best he could; but he was getting rather discontented; for there was nothing to drink at this needlessly sumptuous repast but thin cold wine. At last, however, he said to the servant who was in vain tempting him with various decanters—

"I say, my man, could you get me a wee drappie o' whisky?"

"Yes, sir; certainly, sir."

And after that Mr. Ross proved a far more pleasant companion; and gave Mrs. Sydenham such a picture of the life at Boat of Garry, and such graphic accounts of the exploits of himself and his friends there, that she said that nothing but his description of the demon steam-yacht deterred her from begging for an invitation there and then.

After luncheon there was a movement to return to the pictures; and Fitzgerald seized the opportunity to bid them good-day.

"Where are you off to now?" his wife asked.

"I want to overhaul one or two of the libraries, if there's time before dinner."

"Let me go with you."

"In that dress? You would be a pretty spectacle in Shoreditch."

"I could remain in the hansom."

"Get away with you. You are off duty; you are a helpless invalid—though you don't look it. Stay with Mrs. Sydenham, and see your friends. My shooting-coat isn't swell enough for that."

"Very well," she said. "When shall you be home?"

"At a quarter to seven, whatever happens. I left word there would be an enormous *table d'hôte;* so you can seize hold of all the nice people. Don't forget John Ross; don't lose sight of him. We will make John Ross the occasion; and we will get him to make a speech."

"You will do nothing of the kind; I won't have anybody tortured. Shall I ask the Giffords?"

"Yes."

"And the Sydenhams?"

"If they have not had enough of us to-day already. Ask anybody you like, who happens to be disengaged. It is John Ross's day; let him have a triumph in the evening."

And in a couple of minutes thereafter he was in a hansom making for Commercial Road East, and striving to extract a few items of intelligence from that morning's newspaper, which he had not before had time to glance over.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

AT INISHEEN.

AND again we will let a few more years go by, bringing us to quite the other day, in fact. At the window of a room in the Imperial Hotel at Inisheen a small boy, apparently about eight or nine, is standing, regarding the carriage and pair below, which are being led off to the stable-yard. He is a good-looking little lad, with large, soft, pensive eyes, a square forehead, and curly hair—a healthy-looking little chap, too, though one foot is off the ground, and he is supporting himself with a stick. To him enters his father.

"Well, Master Frank, shall you be able to amuse yourself while I go out for a stroll? You see what comes of climbing after wood-pigeons' nests."

"A good job, too," remarked the small boy, with complacency.

"What is? Spraining your ankle?"

"Yes. You wouldn't have brought me with you if it hadn't been for that, papa. Mamma said you were very busy. And I wasn't to interfere with you. I was to take great care not to be a trouble to you, she said, for you liked to be alone when you were finishing a book, and I wasn't to mind if you left me by myself. And I don't mind a bit."

He glanced round the room.

"And is this really the inn that your papa kept?"

"Yes, it is; perhaps you don't think much of it?"

"Well," said the small boy, with delicacy, not wishing to wound his father's feelings, "it isn't *very* swell, is it?"

"When I was a boy, my lad, it was the only hotel in

Inisheen, and it was regarded as a place of importance. See, here are your books. You'd better sit down for a while and give your foot a rest."

"I like the stories you tell better than those in the books," remarked Master Frank, regarding the volumes with anything but favour, "only mamma says I ought never to believe them."

"Which, though?"

"The stories you tell. Mamma says you are always making a fool of people. Was it true, papa, about the man who went to India?"

"Really there are so many people go to India that I have forgotten."

"But the man who went out to India; and he pretended to have a sun-stroke; and then, when he came back, he was allowed to do anything he liked, for his friends were afraid of bringing it on again, and the police always let him off, because he had been mad; and he lived such a merry life. Was that true, papa?"

"Well, if it had not happened, how would people have known anything about it?" was the evasive reply. "Now take a book; and put your foot up on a chair; while I go and see if there's anybody in the place I know now. I don't suppose there will be since Andy the Hopper—do you remember the sketch of him that Mr. Ross made for you one night?——"

"Oh yes, papa."

"Well, he is away at Tramore now, they say; and I doubt whether there is a human being I know now in the town."

And yet, when he went out into the sunlight this older part of Inisheen did not seem to have changed much during the last seven years. If there was any difference, it lay rather between the Inisheen that he was accustomed to dream about and this present, everyday, rather commonplace Inisheen. This was the second time he had visited the little town since finally he had left it for London; and on each occasion the same rectification had to be made. Yes; there were the quiet, respectable-looking houses, and the shops, and the town-hall; the wharves and quays, with tar-barrels, and coals; the barques and brigantines stranded

on the mud; and the broad waters of the bay; and the sunny green of the hills beyond. To get a wider view he climbed up the face of the steep slope on which the town is partly built; there were cottages here and there apparently clinging hazardously to the ascent; fragments of old ruins cropping up; cocks and hens fluttering among the dust or hiding among the nettles; children clambering over walls topped with marjoram; and an old gentleman, in a jacket without sleeves, fast asleep in a damp and shady angle of a garden wall which was profuse with moss and hart's-tongue fern. Then he came to the enclosures round the houses of the richer people—on the summit of the hill, amid gardens and lush meadows; and from this height he could look down on the picturesque little harbour; and the rippling green waters of the bay; and the wide sandbanks left exposed by the tide; and also on the far expanse of sea pale and blue in the hazy sunlight, with one or two dots of ships apparently making slowly in for the tiny port before a gentle southerly breeze.

He felt so much of a stranger here. No doubt, if he were to go through the shops down there he might discover this one or that who would perhaps recognise Master Willie; and no doubt, if he were away up over the hills there ("the mountain" they called them) he could find a cabin or two where he would be welcomed by some aguish old crone, with many a "Glory be to God!" But of his old intimates, as he had learned from time to time, there was scarcely one left. His father had died many years before. Why, even the *Cork Chronicle*, which the Inisheen people used to take in chiefly because Master Willie put his poetry about Inisheen, and his songs and palaverings about the Inisheen girls, into it, existed no longer. When he drove up to the Imperial, the very ostler who took the horses had never heard of the Fitzgeralds who once had the place. And yet, as he looked at the quays and the houses and the harbour Inisheen did not seem to have changed so much. It was he who was changed; and something else—was it his youth? or a remembrance of his youth that, whether he thought of it or not, was always haunting him, and making Inisheen look strange?—seemed now far away.

He wandered down from this height, thinking he would go and have a look at the newer Inisheen that faced the sea. As he was walking along the main thoroughfare of the older town—perhaps not noticing much—and passing one of the side streets leading to the quays, he heard an exclamation behind him—

"The Lord be marciful to us."

He turned instantly and recognised old Molly, who for innumerable years had sold nuts and apples and oranges to the boys of Inisheen. The old woman struggled up from the barrel on which she was sitting—

"Och, God help us all, 'tis yoursilf, Masther Willie!" she said, and she seized his hand with her long skinny fingers. "Och, 'tis the great gintleman you are now, wid your horses and your carriages riding through the town. Shure I thought 'twas yoursilf, Masther Willie; and then I thought 'twas nansinse; and sure you're come to take the place your father had before ye—his sowl's in glory, amin!—oh, wirasthrue, but me back is broke wid the cowld nights—and yer honour's coming back to the Impayrial now—and you'll have a good word for ould Molly wid the sarvints——"

He had to explain to the ancient Molly—whose aspect, by the way, would have been more venerable had her gray hair been less dishevelled and had she worn a dress more appropriate to her age and sex than an old soldier's jacket, the scarlet of which had got sadly faded through exposure to wind and weather—that he had no intention of re-establishing the Fitzgeralds in the Imperial Hotel; and then he presented her with all the silver he could find in his pockets and passed on.

How often he had walked along this very road, in the far bygone days, with the eager ambitions and wild desires of youth busy with the future! And now that he had attained to almost everything he had dreamed of—in certain directions to far more than ever he had dreamed of—to what did it all amount? Well, he had made many friends, known and unknown; and that was pleasant; and he strove to remain on kindly terms with them; and to do what little he could, in the way of writing, if that might be of any service to them, in as thorough and honest a fashion as was

possible. But so far as he could see, there was not anything in life much better than showing a picture-book to a sick child, or some such simple act of benevolence or charity; and in this respect he had entirely adopted the views of his wife. Neither he nor she was concerned about the motives that might be imputed to them. If it was a luxury, they could afford it. If it was self-gratification, at least it did not harm others. If it was outraging the principles of political economy, the principles of political economy would have to look out for themselves. In short, both he and she, as it turned out, found themselves with so many things to do that they really had no time to sit down and construct analyses of the Moral Faculty.

This modern Inisheen out-fronting the sea was more changed than the older part of the town, for a number of new-looking villas had been added—most likely the summer residences of the Cork people. But it was pleasanter for him to turn his back on these, and find before him the old familiar ocean-picture; the spacious view that he was in the habit of conjuring up before his mental vision whenever he wanted to introduce a sense of light and width—and perhaps a touch of solitariness?—into his writing. Solitary enough it was. Nothing but the level miles of pale brown sand; and the vast extent of glassy, pale blue sea; and between these the long thin lines of the ripples that came in and in, darkening in shadow, until suddenly there was a gleam of silver, sharp as the edge of a knife, and then a curling over of white foam sparkling in the sun, and the protracted "*hs—ss—ss*" as the wave broke along the shore. A pale and placid picture; perhaps a trifle sad also; for with such a faint and fair background, the mind is apt to set to work to put in figures—and these would be walking along the sand, naturally; and they might be young; and dreaming dreams.

Then he recollected the poor chap with the sprained ankle; and so he turned and walked leisurely back to the hotel; discovering, when he got there, that Master Frank had been engaged the while in carving his name, in bold letters, on one of the window-shutters.

"When I grow up, papa," said he, contemplating this

tentative effort at immortality, "I hope I shall be famous like you."

"Who told you I was famous?" his father said, with a laugh.

"Mamma. I wish I could get such nice letters from people you don't know; from America, and Canada, and as far away as where Robinson Crusoe lived. Sometimes mamma reads them to me. What did you do to make the Queen call you 'well-beloved'?"

"What nonsense has got into your head now?"

"No, it is not," said Master Frank, pertinaciously. "Mamma read it out of a big book. The Queen said you were 'trusty and well-beloved.'"

"Oh, that is nothing. Don't you know, when the Queen appoints you a Royal Commissioner to enquire into anything, that is the phrase she uses. I suppose your mamma had got hold of that Blue-book——"

"But the Queen would not say so unless she meant it. She doesn't tell lies, does she?"

"Why, of course not. Well, Master Frank, until you are older we will postpone the subject, and in the meantime we will have some tea. I suppose you are aware that you may have late dinner with me to-night?"

"Just as you please, papa. Mamma said I was not to trouble you——"

"And you have remembered your lesson very well. In consideration of which I will tell you a story——"

"Oh, will you?"—and immediately the small lad hobbled across from the window to his father's knee, looking up with his big girlish-looking eyes full of expectation. For the stories his papa told were far more wonderful than anything to be found in books.

"Not only that—but it is a story of a bull!"

"A *very* wild one?"

"A *fearfully* wild one."

There was a sort of sigh of delight.

"Well, this bull used to roam about just behind this very town of Inisheen; and it is very open there—plenty of bog-land—and he could see you from a great distance; and he'd come stalking along the road, right in the middle,

and allow no one to pass. And he was especially savage with boys; and you wouldn't believe the roundabout ways we had to take——"

"Oh, were you one of them, papa?"

"I was alive then," the story-teller continued, evasively, "and I may have looked on and seen what the other boys did. But the terrible business about this beast was that he could hop over a wall with the greatest ease; and it was no use shutting a gate on him, if he meant to be after you. He was a terror to the whole district—especially to the boys; and we used to get angry—I mean, they used to get angry, and wonder what they would do to the bull if only they could get the chance. Then at last one of us—one of them hit on a plan. They went carefully along the road and picked out a place where the bog came close up, and where there were just two or three clumps of moss so that you could cross over if you went lightly and watched your footing. Of course you remember what Bruce did at Bannockburn——"

"He dug pits and covered them over——"

"Precisely. Well, then, this was a sort of ambuscade like that. I don't think ambuscade is the right word; but it's good enough for a bull. Well, then, the next thing the boys did——"

"But you were one of them, papa?"

"I might be looking on. I might have gone round by the bog that day. At all events they went to a person called Andy the Hopper that I've often told you about; and Andy was a curious-minded creature, who always liked to have red sleeves when he could afford it to his jacket; and they got the loan of an old jacket with the red sleeves; and they spread that out on two sticks; and away they went along the road. And there, sure enough, was the bull. He didn't say anything; he only looked. Then they went on, cautiously; until they were within a certain distance; and there they stopped. The bull didn't move. Then they began to retreat a little—and you must know, Master Frank, that a bull always understands that as an invitation for him to come and chivy you. The bull came on a bit; stopped for a second; then gave a loud bellow; and then

came on faster. This was precisely what those wicked boys wanted. For now they turned and took to their heels; and the bull came careering after them; and then, at the spot they had marked, they left the road, and went hopping across the bog, that was very wet at that time, for there had been much rain. Very well, then, you see, when the bull came tearing along, he had no notion of a strategy or an ambuscade or anything of that kind; and he did not stop to consider that he was far heavier than a boy; and that his sharp hard feet would sink where theirs would just touch the little dry clumps; and so in he went with a splash and a struggle—and another splash and a struggle —and another splash and another struggle—always getting deeper and deeper into the thick black mud, and bellowing and roaring with rage. You never saw anything like it. Mind you, when we stopped and looked, I won't say we weren't a little bit frightened; for if one of his fore-legs had got hold of a piece of good solid ground, we might have had another run for it, and he'd have knocked the whole town to smithereens before he'd have stopped. After a long time, however, he gave it up. He found his struggles useless; and when he bellowed it wasn't 'Wait till I catch you,' it was 'Who's going to get me out?'——"

"Papa," said Master Frank, thoughtfully, "could you have got near him then?"

"Oh yes, I daresay. He was stuck fast."

"You could have got near him in safety?"

"Oh yes, I think so," answered the father, not doubting that the boy, who had been taught to be kind to all animals, had imagined some way of getting the poor bull out of his troubles.

"Then didn't you get a big stick and beat him over the head?" said Master Frank, eagerly.

"Well, no," said the papa, a little disappointed. "But I'll tell you what happened—it took nearly half the people of Inisheen to get that bull out; for they were all afraid to go and fasten the ropes; and when it did get on to dry land again it seemed anxious to reduce the population of the neighbourhood. I don't think I saw that," the narrator added, demurely.

"You didn't wait to see it hauled out?" said Master Frank, with staring eyes.

"No, you see, Frankie, there were a lot of wicked boys about the place; and the people suspected they had inveigled the bull into the bog; and supposing I had been about just at that time—looking on, you know—well, they might have thought I had had a hand in it, and one might have got into trouble. It's always the best plan to keep away when you see a scrimmage going on. The most innocent people are sometimes suspected. Never you go near crowds."

Master Frank thought over this story for some time; and then he said, in an absent kind of way—

"I believe it was you yourself, papa, that teased the bull into the bog."

They had late dinner together in the evening, and no doubt it was that circumstance that provoked Master Frank into unusual animation and talkativeness, in the course of which he unlocked many a dark and secret cupboard of his mind, where he had stored away subjects or remarks for subsequent examination. He startled his father, for example, by suddenly, and *à propos* of nothing, asking him how it was possible for a man to have three godmothers.

"I don't know what you mean!" his father said.

"Why, don't you remember, papa, the organ-grinder coming to Hyde Park Gardens, and playing 'The Last Rose of Summer'?"

"No, I don't recollect that remarkable circumstance. I suppose he didn't remain very long?"

"But don't you remember you asked mamma what sort of a man he could have been who first twisted the air about with variations; and then you began and told me all that you hoped had happened to him when he was alive?"

"Well, I don't remember that either."

"And you said you hoped he had three godmothers, and never knew what his name was, because they kept bothering him——"

"I am not quite sure; but I think we must have been talking nonsense, Frankie."

"And mamma said you had invented enough evil things for him, and you might turn to the men who were cutting the tails off cattle and shooting at people here in Ireland."

"The less you say about that the better, Master Frank; for in this part of the country walls have ears."

"I know," said Master Frank, confidently, "that mamma will be very glad when you have done with the fishing, and we all go back to England again——"

"Nonsense!"

"But I heard her say so, papa!"

"She was having a little joke with you, Master Frank. You don't understand these deep questions yet, my lad. Don't you know that I am not a landlord, nor an Englishman, nor one who pays rent? So you see I can't do anything wrong; and we are as safe at Boat of Garry as in Hyde Park——"

"I know mamma does not like you to go away fishing by yourself," said Master Frank, doggedly.

"But do I ever go away fishing by myself—or did I ever go away fishing by myself until you must needs set about spraining your ankle? And supposing there were any of these rascals about Boat of Garry, which there are not; and supposing they were coming stealing along on tiptoe when I wasn't watching; and supposing you were standing by with a gaff in your hand, and a gaff with remarkably sharp steel point, what then? What would you do? You can lay hold of a salmon or a sea-trout smartly enough. Could you catch one of Captain Moonlight's men by the ear?"

The boy did not answer that, for he was evidently considering something with much care. At last he said, meditatively—

"I wish you were the king, papa, and then you would show the rascals something."

"But how? What should I do?"

"Kill the whole lot," was the prompt answer.

"Well, that would teach them a lesson, wouldn't it!"

Dinner over, Fitzgerald drew in his chair to the fire—more by custom than for warmth, for the night was mild—and lit a cigar, and proceeded to look over a newspaper.

This last performance was a sore trial for the patience of Master Frank, who doubtless considered that it would have been much more sensible to devote the time to a discussion of the affairs of the country between two congenial minds. As for himself, he scorned to seek refuge in books. Not having two legs that could twist about the chairs in his usual fashion, he put the one at his disposal into every conceivable attitude, until he nearly succeeded in tilting the table over with his foot; then he tied a bit of string to a teaspoon, and twitched, to see if it would spin like a spoon-bait; then he got out his pocket-knife and slowly and carefully sharpened the edge on the boards of a book, finishing up by carving his initials thereon, just to try the point, as it were; and then, as time went on, he grew suspicious.

"Papa," said he, "you are not going out, are you?"—for, indeed, Fitzgerald had once or twice gone to the window and glanced outside.

"If I do," his father said, "it won't make any difference. It will soon be time for you to be off to bed. I may go out; but I shall not be long; and you will be sound asleep."

Nothing more was said for a while; Master Frank being engaged in drawing a portrait of Balbus on the title-page of his Latin Grammar. Then he said—

"Is it a beautiful night, papa?"

"Oh yes."

Then again—

"Is it a *very* beautiful night, papa?"

"The moon must be getting higher now," his father said, going to the window, and pushing the blind aside. "Oh yes, it is a fine enough night."

The boy got hold of his stick and hobbled across the room.

"Let me look, papa. Oh, isn't it a beautiful night! What a pity it is we can't see the sea."

"Frank," said his father, putting his hand on the boy's head, "would you like to go with me?"

He looked up with a bright, eager look of assent and gladness; but instantly—with a great deal of bravery—he shook his head.

"I promised mamma not to bother you," he said slowly. "And—and besides, papa, I can't walk."

He hung down his head a little, to hide the tears of disappointment that would rise to his eyes. His father was looking out of the window, and did not notice. But presently he said—

"Poor chap, you've had rather a dull afternoon. Look here, Frankie, I'll tell you what we'll do—as sure as ever was. The horses have done almost nothing to-day; supposing we were to get the carriage round? What do you say to that? We'll go for a drive, my lad; and then you'll not only see the sea in moonlight, but the bay also, and a wooded glen I was going to. What do you say to that?"

"Mamma won't be angry——" suggested Master Frank, doubtfully—but it was clear from his face that he regarded the proposal with immense delight.

"We will buy her something, Frankie, to pacify her, when we get back to Bantry. Now you go and sit down; and I will get hold of Murtough; and as soon as we can we'll have the carriage ready for you. But I can tell you, my lad, that wasn't how I was treated when I was a boy—there were no late dinners for me, or a carriage to take me out for a drive in the moonlight. I really don't know what this generation is coming to."

"But papa, if you could have got it, you would have taken it?" said the boy, looking up.

"That's neither here nor there," his father said, as he put on his hat and coat. "That's neither here nor there. What I say is that boys nowadays are spoiled; and especially boys that are allowed to come to Boat of Garry when they ought to be at their school at Campden Hill; and still more especially boys whose mothers buy for them a twelve-foot trout-rod before they've even got the length of *omnis Gallia.* Now don't you attempt to go down those stairs till I come and fetch you."

Fitzgerald seemed in the lightest and pleasantest of humours when finally he and his small boy had got themselves ensconced in the open landau, with an abundance of rugs over their knees. He had, indeed, been loth to leave

the little chap for a second time that day, even though it was not very far from his bed-time; and he was glad to give him this unexpected trip as some compensation for the dulness of the afternoon. Moreover the night was fine. The air was mild; the skies clear; Inisheen and its wide, still waters looked quite picturesque in the moonlight.

"And what would you say now, Master Frank," his papa asked, as they drove out from the town into the silence of the country, "if I were to tell you that I had a tryst with the fairies in the wooded glen I told you about?"

The boy looked up; he seldom knew whether his father was joking or in earnest.

"I did not think there were any fairies nowadays," was the answer.

"Well," his father continued, "if you ever make a tryst with Don Fierna and his little people to come and visit them once in every seven years, you will find it more and more difficult, as you grow older and older, to listen hard enough to hear them coming, and to look hard enough to see the sides of the glen opening and the long procession appearing. When you are young perhaps it is a little easier. Do you remember how they stole away Burd Helen into Elfinland?"

"Oh yes. You told me about that."

"Then you remember that Childe Rowland was the youngest of all her brothers. Do you think any of the older ones could ever have found out the dark tower, no matter how Merlin helped them? If Childe Rowland had not had the eyes of youth, he never would have found his way; and I believe Burd Helen would have been in the dark tower still."

"I have never seen any," was the small lad's practical remark.

"Well, that is strange. But in any case you won't mind waiting a little while in the carriage, when we get to the glen, and I will go down by myself, and if I hear or see anything I will come back and tell you."

"Oh, but I know better than that, papa," said the boy, shrewdly. "You are not going to look for any fairies. When you go away by yourself, it is to watch rabbits and

other things, and write about them. I know very well. Whenever mamma sees you go out alone, without your fishing-rod, she always calls us back."

"Oh, indeed. But then, you see, Frankie, you were never at Inisheen before; and strange things used to happen about here, many years ago, when I was young; and I don't know what may not be seen in that glen. So you will remain in the carriage for a while, when we get there; and if I spy out the fairies down in the hollow, with their glow-worm lamps, you know, I shan't say a single word to them, but I'll come back to the road at once and whistle for you. Do you understand?"

"That's all nonsense, papa. I don't believe there are any."

"Wait and see."

At length they arrived at a portion of the road that was shadowed over by a double row of elm-trees; and here Fitzgerald called on Murtough to stop; and got out, leaving Master Frank in the carriage.

"Now, you listen, Frankie," said he, "and when I whistle make ready——"

"I could not go down into that glen with my sprained ankle, papa," the boy said.

"People never know," said he, as he went up and over the little bank by the roadside, "what they can do when they see fairies coming along. It is quite an event in one's life."

Indeed, it was with no great heaviness of heart, no very acute anguish of remembrance, that he now, for the second time, and in middle age—that is to say at seven-and-thirty —went to keep the tryst he had made at three-and-twenty. It was with a brisk enough step that he crossed the open glade, and then more cautiously made his way down the steep bank, through the brushwood, until once more he stood by the little scooped-out hollow in the rock, into which the water fell with a continuous murmur. The place was quite unaltered. It might have been yesterday that he and Kitty had stood there, with their hands clasped, before he rowed her away back to Inisheen. It might have been yesterday that he had gone back to the place only to

find himself standing there alone; conjuring up phantoms, and not then quite so reconciled to the fate that had befallen him.

Yes; that former visit, seven years before, had been a sharper thing. It seemed to him that then, for the first time, he had realised what this separation meant. Our other griefs and miseries over the loss of our loved ones who go away from us through the sad portal of death, keen as they may be, are in time solaced by a wistful hope of reunion. What is that but a temporary separation, if they are awaiting us yonder, with light on their faces? But this separation from one who, as we think, is to be linked with us through this brief life, and in death, and in the farther life beyond—that seemed to him the true separation; and the breaking down of faith; and a hopelessness for ever and ever. Something of the old misery had come back on him; the old pain had stirred again at his heart; the quick, sudden agony of the discovery of her falsehood had throbbed again, even after these years. It was so strange —his standing here on one side; on the other a vacant space, a voiceless air, a darkness where the light of her eyes ought to have been. That night was one not easily to be forgotten.

But now, seven years later, all that was over for the most part; and he sought out a bit of rock which afforded him a kind of seat; and sat down and listened to the monotonous gurgling and rushing of the water. He was scarcely sorry now that all that had happened in the olden time. It was a kind of pretty picture, mostly. Or rather it was a kind of well of romance and sentiment that he could dip into when he pleased, for literary purposes. Nay, to tell the truth, had not this very journey been partly undertaken with some such purpose? It was like renewing one's youth, to get into this realm of imagination again. That may have been the moral of his remarks to Master Frank about the increasing difficulty of finding out where the fairies were.

And yet, while he was thus convincing himself that he was a highly matter-of-fact person; and striving to regard that episode in his youthful life as something apart from

him; and inclined to wonder what influence on his writing these occurrences and despairs and all the rest of it may have had; some foolish fondness for the bygone days stole over him; and he would have been glad to know that Kitty was well, and looking pretty, and enjoying content. He had heard of her once or twice, but in the vaguest way. He did not know where she was living now. And indeed the only regret that possessed him at this moment was about the final portion of that vow that he and she had taken together. Why should there have been any hatred or revenge in these promises made by two young people who could know so little of what was before them? Kitty herself had begged of him to make it a love night. He remembered the imploring look of her eyes; the very tone of her voice (and how sweet and soft and musical that was!) "*Oh, Willie, not that,*" she had said, "*let this be a love night!*" Did he wish "*grief to be a guest in her house, and sorrow to dwell in her house, for ever*"? Surely not.

Kitty had made his life very beautiful for a time. Supposing that he had never met her at all—in these early years? Could he ever have understood quite so well that nameless witchery that makes so much of the wonder and joy of human existence and is the cause of so much of its misery? Could he have known quite so intimately what all the poets have been talking about, since ever Helen came to Ilion's towers—with "her young eyes still wounding where they looked"? He never would have known how keen the blue of the speedwell was, had not she and he together found it on those far uplands, that now seemed to him as if they must have been very near the sky, so clear and vivid was the light over them. Poor Kitty! Did she ever sing now "Then farewell, but whenever you welcome the hour"? Had she ever come to Cork again; and climbed up to Audley Place; and thought of the old days? There was no reason why she should not have made such a pilgrimage; her husband was well off; Kitty would have a maid of her own now; and she used rather to like travelling about.

The night was just as still as that on which he and Kitty had come there; there was not a breath of wind

stirring the bushes overhead; the only sound was the prattling of the streamlet in the silence.

"It sounds like laughing," he was thinking. "Perhaps it has listened to all the nonsense that has been talked by the different lovers who have come here; and it may have understood all the time; and gone on chuckling. It does sound as if it was laughing. To think of all the secrets it has heard; and the vows; and never a word of warning as to what it knew of the results. Is it malicious; or only sardonic—that chuckling down there? But it is better to make a joke of it. Everything gets laughed away in time."

All that bygone period seemed far away; and beautiful in a fashion, now that the pain of parting with it was over. It had enriched his life; there were innumerable pictures he could conjure up—always with Kitty smiling and pleasant as the central figure; perhaps, too, it had given him a key to unlock some of the secrets and mysteries of existence. Was there any need to think harshly of poor Kitty or to speak of betrayal or falsehood? We do not quarrel with the dead. She was as one dead to him; and the memory of her was not tragic, or even pathetic, but rather pretty, with a vague and poetical charm around it. It had been pathetic and tragic enough, and darkened with terror and pain and the wrestlings of despair; but now, when he thought of her, he saw a laughing and pleasant Kitty, rather inclined to be impertinent, and wandering carelessly in sweet woodland ways. It was never for Kitty to rise to the level of this other and beautiful nature that he knew; that was linked with his; that provoked his wonder and admiration the further that he saw of its nobleness and simplicity. No; Kitty was a charming little coquette; tender in a way; not without her good points; and a very fitting heroine for love-verses in the *Cork Chronicle.*

And yet—and yet—there was a kind of tremulousness about those pictures that rose before him; he could not quite coldly regard them, and ticket off their literary value; sometimes a trace of the nameless fascination and glamour of youth came wandering down through the years—a

memory of something that he had seen in Kitty's eyes. Was it the night in the South Mall; the streets all swimming with mud and rain; the gas-lamps shining golden on the pavements; these two under one umbrella; and Kitty suddenly turning her face to him?——. Or was it the Sunday morning up by the barracks; a spring morning, with the rooks cawing, and the air sweet; and Kitty, not knowing he was there, and going by him, and then raising the tear-filled eyes with astonishment and a quick glad light of love? Kitty had pretty eyes in that olden time; and a pretty voice, too, whether she was laughing, or singing about the Bells of Shandon, or only teasing poor old Miss Patience.

He rose. To look over one's life in this way, however satisfied one may be with the existing result, is a sad kind of thing; and the stream down there in the semi-darkness seemed no longer chuckling and laughing at the follies and dreams of youth, but rather saying something of a farewell as it hurried away to the sea. "*Farewell—farewell,*" So lives pass to the unknown, and are forgotten.

He laid hold of one of the bushes, and clambered up into the moonlight again, and crossed the open space to the wall; then for a second he turned and glanced up and down the little valley, that lay there so white and still. He was glad it had chanced to be so beautiful a night. This was a peaceful picture that he would carry away in his memory. In bygone years he had looked forward to a solitary keeping of his tryst with a shuddering dread; but what was there to dread about it? It was a pretty place; and he had awakened some recollections that had a sort of half-pathetic poetic fancy about them. That was all. He wished he could paint the glen as it looked now; but he thought it would be difficult to convey the sense of solitude and remoteness that the perfect silence produced.

He mounted the wall and leapt down into the road.

"Well, Master Frank," said he, lightly, "I am sorry to have kept you waiting so long; I almost think you'll want some supper when you get back."

But he found the boy standing up in the carriage, and looking wonderingly along the road behind them.

"Papa," said he, with an expression almost of alarm on his face, "did you see her? Did you see the lady?"

Fitzgerald stopped for a moment: he was just about entering the carriage.

"What lady?" he said, in a perfectly calm voice.

"Didn't you see her? A lady in mourning," the boy said; and now he seemed to be more reassured. "I don't know who she is. I don't know her; but she came up and spoke to me."

His father regarded him, apparently unable to say anything; his hand still grasping the door of the carriage.

"She said, 'Is your name Willie?' I said, 'No; my name is Frank.' Then she said, 'But it is Frank Fitzgerald, is it not?' I said, 'Yes.' Then she said, 'Will you let me kiss you?' And she was crying when she lifted her veil. And then she went away along the road back there."

Fitzgerald glanced along the road; there was no one visible. Then, with every appearance of composure, he stepped into the carriage; shut the door; and said briefly—

"Home, Murtough."

"Papa," said the boy, presently, "who was she?"

"How can I tell? Don't bother me—not at present."

There was a strange look on his face, as they drove on in silence. Frank remembered his mother's injunctions; when his father seemed disinclined for talking, he could keep his mouth shut. And indeed they were near to Inisheen before Fitzgerald again spoke.

"Don't you see, Frankie," he said carelessly, "it is the most natural thing in the world? Of course there are plenty of visitors always coming down from Cork to the seaside—to the villas I showed you; and on such a beautiful night why should not any one go out for a walk? Or the lady who spoke to you may belong to some house in the neighbourhood; there is a little village, Carrigha, not more than half a mile farther on. Why, it's the simplest thing in the world. It is just the night for any one to come out for a stroll. But I am beginning to doubt whether there was any such person. You were thinking of the fairies, Frankie—wasn't that it?——"

"Murtough saw her, papa!"

"Oh, well; a visitor in the neighbourhood, no doubt," he said absently.

"But how did she know my name?" said the boy, still wondering.

"That's what she didn't know," said his father—though he seemed to be talking about one thing, and thinking about another. "As for guessing at Fitzgerald—that is nothing. It is simple to make a guess like that. Every one about here is a Fitzgerald or a M'Carthy. That is nothing. No doubt she belongs to Carrigha. What was she like, did you notice?"

He spoke with indifference; but did not look at the boy.

"N—no," the small lad said doubtfully, "for she was crying—and—and I was frightened."

"But she kissed you?"

"Oh yes."

His father was silent for some time.

"Perhaps the lady has lost a little boy of about your age," he said by-and-by.

"Perhaps that is it," Master Frank said thoughtfully, "for she was dressed all in black."

Then they rattled through the streets of the little town, and drew up at the door of the hotel.

"Now, Master Frank," said his father, when they were both together in the sitting-room, "you must be up early to-morrow; for we have to drive all the way to Cappoquin; and we ought to be there as soon as Mr. Ross."

"To-morrow? So soon as that? I would like to have stayed some days at Inisheen, papa," said Master Frank, wistfully.

"Why?"

"To see all the places you have told me about. I would like to have seen the cabin where Jerry the tailor's hawks are; and—and the place where the bull went into the bog; and mamma said I was to be sure to cut her a piece off the hawthorn-tree."

"What hawthorn-tree?"

"The one you used to climb up; and the branches

spread out at the top; and you used to have a seat there, and a book, and no one could see you——"

"Do you know, Master Frank, that cutting memorial bits off trees and carving your name on window-shutters are amongst the most heinous of crimes? And it would be no use your remaining in Inisheen, and trying to see all these places, for you can't get about easily at present, poor chap. No; some other time we will have a longer stay here; and perhaps we will come over in the winter; and then you might go out with me for a night after the wild-duck; wouldn't that be fine?"

"Oh yes, papa."

"And meanwhile we must get away at once from Inisheen, so as not to keep Mr. Ross waiting at Cappoquin or Lismore. When I was at your age I could easily get ready to start by seven."

"Do you mean seven to-morrow morning, papa?"

"Yes."

"Very well. I will be ready by seven."

And still he lingered about the room, without saying good-night.

"Papa," said he, at length, "when I told you about the lady, why did your face turn so white?"

His father was sitting at the fire, staring into it; and did not hear.

"Come and say good-night, my lad," he said presently, "and I will call you at half-past six, if you are not up. You are sure you won't have any supper? Very well, good-night!"

"But I was asking you, papa——"

"Asking me what?"

"Why did your face turn so white when you were in the road, and I told you I had seen the lady?"

"Nonsense—nonsense! Your head has got filled with fancies to-night, my lad—you were too close to Elfinland, perhaps. Good-night; and don't dream of Don Fierna."

"Good-night, papa."

The next morning was again fine; and they had every prospect of a beautiful drive along the banks of the richly-

wooded river. And when Master Frank, seated in the landau, and having his sprained ankle carefully propped and cushioned, understood that he was to see something more of the Blackwater, he almost forgot his disappointment over missing the various places at Inisheen he had expected to visit.

"Of course, papa," said he, "you'll show me the very spot where you fell in and lost the salmon?"

"We shall go near there anyway," said his father, as they started, and drove away through the town.

"And you'll show me the moorhen's nest, won't you?"

"What moorhen's nest?"—for, indeed, this boy's memory was wonderful.

"Don't you remember, papa, you told me about a moorhen that had got a bit of wicker-work by chance and had pieced it into her nest. I *should* like to see that."

"Bless the boy!—do you imagine that the nest is in existence yet? All these things that I have told you about happened years and years ago."

They were now away from the houses; and he rose in the carriage, and turned to have a last look at the place they were leaving. Inisheen looked fair enough in the early light. The shallow green waters of the bay, the boats by the quays, the Town Hall with its golden cock, and the terraced hill with its gardens, were all shining in the morning sun; and far beyond the harbour the pale blue sea was broken here and there with sharp glints of white, for there was a fresh breeze blowing in from the south. When he sat down again there was an absent look on his face.

"That moorhen's nest, Master Frankie," said he, regarding the thoughtful eyes of the boy, "belongs to a time long gone by; and things change. Poor lad, that is a lesson you will have to learn for yourself some day."

THE END.

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